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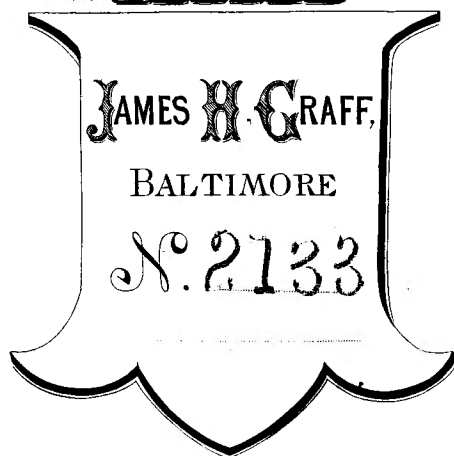
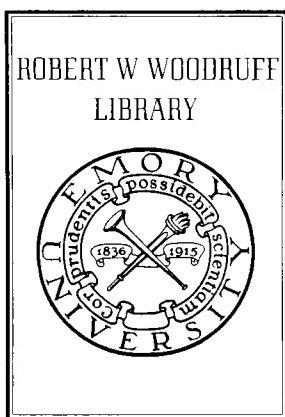
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We remember the many hours that have passed smoothly by, as, with feet on the fender, we have followed heroine after heroine of his from the dawn of her love to its happy or disastrous close, and one is astounded at one’s own ingratitude in writing a word against a succession of tales that ‘give delight and hurt not.’”—*Fortnightly Review*.

LOVE STORIES

OF THE

ENGLISH WATERING-PLACES.

New Edition.

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LOVE STORIES

OF THE

ENGLISH WATERING-PLACES.



A TALE OF THE SCARBOROUGH SEASON.



CHAPTER I. ON A STAIRCASE.

I don't know why there should be something pleasantly suggestive about a staircase ; but there is. A nice wide staircase, on whose carpet your foot makes no sound, and against whose balustrade you might have leaned some hot night years ago, talking, with a fan or a bouquet in your hand, and a companion in gossamer listening to you. Perhaps your words meant very little indeed in reality ; but the chances were that they would be heard again in dreams when you were far away, and remembered them no more. You couldn't help putting into them more than you felt ; time and place and surroundings were to blame for that, not you. And it was so stifling in the crowded rooms up there above. People thronged and jostled each other without mercy ; whilst here there was space and quiet, pleasantly broken by the distant music ; and you could talk of the parting which might be for ever, and lower your voice, and for the moment half persuade yourself that here was your fate. Thus you might have stood, as my friend Captain Ralph Galton is standing to-night on that friendly staircase, looking down upon the thick carpet under his feet, and wondering with a vague sense of irresponsibility, what he shall say next, and what will come of it. Mr. Galton is but a country squire, and his captaincy is simply a

yeomanry cavalry affair ; but he has a baronetcy in prospect, and there is nothing countrified about him. He has been everywhere, and seen everything. He is—or was—a little tired of the London season. A white hair or two might be seen prematurely glistening in his black, close-cut locks, and no one would suspect the wealth of strength and muscle in that arm which is trifling rather languidly with a lady's bouquet of hothouse flowers.

'Lady Julia always leaves town before August is over, then?' said Mr. Galton, just raising his eyes to his companion's face. 'And this year she goes—'

'North. I believe it will be Filey or Scarborough. You know both places, of course?'

'I'm ashamed to say no. I begin to think a man should see something of his own country before rambling over others. I'm sure you agree with me?'

'I don't know. I shall be glad to get away from town ; and mamma likes going early. I'll take my flowers now, Mr. Galton ; we had better go back : they will wonder what has become of me.'

'Let them,' said Ralph. 'Consider that it's all over for me,' he added rather incoherently, 'and I'm to look forward to no more meetings like this, Miss Tennent. What an odd thing it seems for people to come into almost everyday contact for a time, and then go their separate ways and forget each other ! Do you know it's a little hard upon a fellow?'

Miss Tennent gave him a quick puzzled glance, and laughed.

'But I don't see why we shouldn't meet again sometimes. I suppose you'll be here when all the world is here, Mr. Galton?'

'No, I'm a rover. My cousin—you've heard of him, I think ; they call him the count—lays forcible hands on me and carries me off whither he will. He has some mad plan about Africa in his head now. Never mind that, however. You say you are glad to get away to the country, Miss Tennent. I don't think you'd like the country all the year round.'

'Perhaps not,' said the young lady drily. 'Still, I've an idea that I should have made a very good farmer's daughter. But I'm not likely to try the country ; it wouldn't suit mamma.'

When he spoke next they were moving on into the ball-room, and he still held the flowers.

'I wish you'd give me one,' he said. 'Do. I'm not a sentimental man, but I should like one of these. I'll keep it as an augury that we shall meet again.'

And then a gentleman came up to claim Miss Tennent, and Ralph's chance was over. He stood a little while watching her moodily, so absorbed in his own thoughts that he started when a voice at his elbow accosted him familiarly.

'Hipped, Galton? Or—let me whisper it—caught at last? Poor old boy! I did think you were fireproof. A man ought to be, by Jove, in such an atmosphere as this. But Lady Julia doesn't do the thing badly, considering how poor they are.'

'Poor!' repeated Ralph speculatively.

'Pinched, very; and three daughters to get off her hands. Look at her. Upon my word, I've a sort of admiration for these indefatigable women. And she has been handsome, too.'

Now Mr. Galton experienced a sensation of disgust at these remarks. He hardly knew why, for a very little time ago he might probably have made them himself. He shook-off the unwelcome critic, and passed on. He had a great mind to alter his plans. He was accountable to no one, he thought, rather dismally. He was alone in the world, and his own master; what would it matter to anybody where he went or what he did?

More people in that room who knew him nodded to each other, and murmured that the captain was caught at last; but inasmuch as these kept their opinions quiet, they did not hurt him. Lady Julia herself had not been unmindful of him, nor of the little tableau on the staircase. It was true that she had three daughters, and was a careworn, hardworked woman. Moreover, this one, Evelyn, was the youngest, and, as her mother considered, the most hopeless of the three. The poor lady thought of the baronetcy in prospect, and sighed out a great sigh of mingled hope and despair. They were so very poor, and it was so difficult to keep up appearances and live like the rest of the world. And these 'at homes,' which of course she must give for her daughters' sakes, did pull so heavily upon her lean purse. The annual visit to the seaside, too, was an indispensable outlay. She could not be in London when all the world was rushing away from it. But here, too, that hard necessity for economy had to be considered; and when some kindly adviser went into raptures over Scarborough, and assumed that of course the fashionable south was the only part to be thought of, Lady Julia smiled a ghastly smile, and said that she dared not try it—the air was too relaxing for the girls. Her medical man had positively ordered the North Cliff. Indeed, Lady Julia herself needed bracing. She knew in her secret heart that this evening, from which she had hoped so much, must be reckoned

a failure so far as the affairs of her youngest daughter were concerned.

‘Evelyn might,’ said her ladyship with bitter irritation; ‘the game was in her own hands; I know she might have brought this tardy captain to the point; and he will be Sir Ralph—not that a baronet is much; but then he is rich. I almost wish we were not going away.’

If Lady Julia could have known the thoughts which perplexed the brain of the country squire that night, what a brilliant ray would have shot across her gloomy regrets and forebodings!

CHAPTER II. THE COUNT REMONSTRATES.

‘I DON’T understand thee, Ralpho mio. Talk of the attractions of this place—and to me! Stuff! Will you smoke?’

The squire turned in his seat and took the offered cigar.

‘I like the place,’ he said; ‘it’s fresh: and you needn’t have come; nobody wanted you, that I know of.’

The gentleman of the cigar-case, a slim, black-haired fellow, with a fine moustache, and a would-be Italian air about him, shrugged his shoulders slightly, and punctured the end of his cigar preparatory to lighting it. When this was accomplished, he threw a glance over the bay, far above which the two were lounging on an iron seat amongst the shrubs and flowers. He slurred over the shoals of white sails in the distance with serene contempt; they were probably only insignificant trading-vessels; and then he came back to the pier and the little packet which had got up its steam, and was scudding away for Filey

‘As to me, it matters little. I am everywhere, and everything, except stationary. But, Ralpho, think of Ischia and Baia. To us who have stood on Tiberio and seen the sunlight shine on Napoli and its blue bay; on Amalfi; on—but what signifies talking? As little as these Sicilians understand the admiration of the forestieri, which, nevertheless, they trade upon, can I comprehend this mad rush to a bleak northern rock, and its chilly waters, unless—’

‘Well, count, unless? Suppose I were tired of wandering in foreign lands?’

‘Non capito.’

‘Speak English, Dick, and don’t pretend,’ said the country

squire brusquely. 'I shall not indulge you with that fictitious count any longer. It has got so habitual, that people will actually begin to believe the scapegrace of his family a real live count.'

'You are so energetic,' remonstrated the count feebly; 'so very English. Seriously, Ralpho, you introduced me last night to a Lady Julia something—forget what. A rather lean woman, you know, with daughters; one of them like a Capriote girl, only not so handsome. There can be no attraction in that quarter, eh?'

'Seriously, Dick,' retorted Ralph, 'I wish you would become a respectable member of society. Give up the wanderer, and settle down—marry, if any one will have you.'

The count took his cigar from his lips in speculative amazement.

'Amico mio, I possess a bare competency for one. Look at me. Are these hands to work? Is this restless soul to be still? No, no, the fool marries and settles down; the great-hearted man travels. He enlarges his experience; he learns from the wide open book of human nature; he becomes a god in his knowledge of good and evil; he is able to move men like puppets to his will.'

'And then?' said Ralph, with an odd sort of pity in his tone; 'and then he grows old, and his friends, if he has made any, which is doubtful, fall away, and his knowledge turns to bitterness, and—'

'Ah, bah! my good fellow, no croaking; it's commonplace. The best of life is but intoxication. Come, we will settle the Burton and Speke controversy next. We will have a look at the Victoria Nyanza. Let us go at once, and give up the Capriote. Ralph,' said the count more earnestly, 'don't you know that you are a catch in the matrimonial market-place? The lean woman knows it, my pious Eneas. I have spoken. If this goes on, I shall feel compelled, as your cousin and fidus Achates, to win the young lady's affections myself, and save you. It's distressing to think of, I know—a blighted young heart—consumption, an early grave—but che fare?'

Captain Galton's face flushed an angry red: then he broke into a laugh, for what use to be angry with the count?

'Dick, you are an insufferable puppy, and worse; but we have been friends: don't force me to quarrel with you.'

'Who—I? I quarrel? My dear boy, what for? I haven't the energy in me. By the way, *en garde!* cigars down!'

The two gentlemen rose ; and the wandering count, Richard Galton, familiarly Dick, stood for some moments as a Frenchman would stand, with his hat in his hand, in the vain expectation of being told to return it to its natural position. Lady Julia scarcely saw him. For Ralph her sweetest smile, her most cordial hand-shake ; for Ralph at first a charming flow of animated trifles, and then a slight expression of regret in answer to his polite inquiries after the two absent daughters. Dear Evelyn was not quite well, and Grace had remained indoors with her ; but it was nothing ; it would pass off. Most probably they should all enjoy together the evening promenade at the Spa. Delightful, was it not ? All the pleasure of the sea-air combined with the attractions of a concert-room. Mr. Galton would excuse Lady Julia now ; she was really obliged to pass on.

The count, looking after her ladyship, twinkled his black eyes as he selected a fresh cigar, and said aloud, 'Keen—very keen. Never mind, Ralpho. We have been fellow-travellers too long to be separated. You will yet traverse with me the bogs of Uganda, and stand enraptured on the shores of the mighty lake.'

Ralph never heard a word ; he was looking down into the short grass under his feet with a lazy half-smile on his lips that told his cousin well enough where his thoughts had wandered. Richard Galton sank back on the iron seat, and smoked sulkily.

'It never shall be, if I can help it,' said this gentleman to himself. 'Is my life to be mulcted of half its luxuries for a dark-faced girl with a gaunt mamma ? No, Ralpho mio, I can't afford to lose thee. Pleasant company and a long purse—no, no !'

CHAPTER III. THE GUARDS' WALTZ.

LADY JULIA sat in the amphitheatre under the colonnade, well screened from any draught. A slim gentleman with an olive complexion had secured this seat for her, and he had been talking to her for some time : one low languid voice amidst the general buzz, distinct only to the ear for which it was intended. Lady Julia's eyes had wandered to the little pavilion wherein the band was stationed, and her attention, to all appearance, was fixed upon the rows of gas-jets running round it ; the glittering

chandelier and the musicians themselves. No one would have guessed, except perhaps her companion, the suppressed anxiety which was hidden under her smile as she listened to the conversation of the slim gentleman beside her.

‘He was always an excitable fellow,’ proceeded the latter gently. ‘A very good fellow indeed, very ; my nearest friend, in fact, as well as my cousin ; but a confirmed rover, I fear, like myself, by this time. You know how much we all become the creatures of habit.’

‘I suppose so,’ said Lady Julia, still smiling. ‘But habits may be broken, you know.’

The count shook his head.

‘It might have been better, as you observed just now, Lady Julia, if my cousin had settled down early in life and become a steady country squire ; but that is all over now ; it is too late. I am firmly convinced that Ralph will never marry. As for me, there are no social considerations to affect my movements. Lonely men, Lady Julia, naturally seek to create for themselves interests and pursuits in place of those which are denied to them. These may be but as paste to the diamond. I cannot say. I fancy in Ralph’s position I might have been different, yet you see how it is with him ; and after all, what a fine generous fellow he is ! Forgive me, however ; it must seem egotistical in me to parade my friend before you. I—’

‘Don’t say so, Mr. Galton. I am a believer in friendship. The world scarcely does justice to it.’

A slight smile curled the count’s black moustache : but he did not answer, for just then the ‘Guards’ Waltz’ struck up, and Lady Julia began to speak of the music. It fell softly on other ears besides those of the poor harassed lady, if indeed there was any softness in it to her anxious heart.

‘You remember where we heard that last,’ said Captain Galton ; ‘and the flower you gave me. I said I’d keep it as an augury, and you see we have met again. Miss Tennent, have I done something to offend you ?’

He asked this with a sudden accession of bravery, for he had been disappointed. This was not the young lady who had stood with him on the staircase, but a chilly likeness of her. Ralph did not know why, but as he recoiled from the freezing politeness of her greeting, an angry, uneasy suspicion darted into his mind, with the count for its object. It was soon banished, however. As he asked that bold question, Ralph, leaning over the wall with his face seaward, was dimly conscious of all the surround-

ings, which, as part of a whole, seemed to come between him and the answer. He saw the lights spring up in the little fishing-smacks out on the bay, and heard the gentle slush of the water against the wall as he leaned over it. Behind him there was a moving of chairs under the colonnade, and the buzz of a thousand voices, as the tulip-bed of human beings sauntered in two distinct streams up and down ; and, over all, mingling with other sounds and softening them, the music of the 'Guards' Waltz.' He waited patiently for Evelyn's answer, but it did not come. And all at once this poor foolish country squire felt his heart leap into his throat, and his pulses stand still at the light touch of a gloved hand on his arm. He knew the next moment that the action was unconscious, and she was not thinking of him.

'Mr. Galton,' said Evelyn, 'look there.' The moon had come out from behind a cloud, and threw down one long line of rippling glory to the edge of the bay. A fishing-boat broke the line ; a mass of black with silver light upon it. They could almost see the form of the fisherman stand out in relief against the black shadow of his boat, and his red light shone like a watchfire in the whiter radiance of the moonbeams. Ralph did look at all this, and from it he turned to his companion.

'How small it makes one feel, doesn't it?' said Evelyn ; 'and what a poor affair all this gas and glitter behind us seems ! I wonder what the fisherman out there thinks of the quiet night, and the silver on his face. Nothing, perhaps. I should like to change places with him for five minutes.'

Mr. Galton did not answer. He could not take his eyes from her face, it was so changed. All the coldness was gone out of it, all the stiffness and propriety which had so irritated and disappointed him. And yet it was with a little pang of regret that he acknowledged to himself how far away he was, individually, from her thoughts, and how little he had to do with the change. For the moment, he was simply one out of the mass—a sort of abstract comprehension, to which her own instinctively appealed.

'Look round,' she went on, 'and listen. Thousands of lives, and every life a story ; who knows how hard some of those stories are ? And then, hear the perpetual hush of the sea as it creeps up the shore. I've read that somewhere ; as though a pitiful patient "hush" were all that could be said to every struggling soul in its sorrow. But they won't be patient for all that. It makes one want to comfort people. I've an insane desire at times to break away over the rubicon and see if I can bind up no wound before I die.'

‘You are thinking of Florence Nightingale?’

‘Yes, I am, and of such as she was. Not that I could ever follow their steps. I rise no further than wishes—empty and profitless.’

‘You are so young,’ said the captain uneasily. ‘When you know a little more of the world—’

‘The world!’ broke in Evelyn, with some bitterness. ‘What world, Mr. Galton? You forget that this is my third season. No! I don’t think I want to know more of the world.’

The captain’s next venture was a quotation from a poem, and it was a blunder. She turned upon him with a quick return to the old manner.

‘I hate poetry; I never could bear it. Mr. Galton, I am disposed to hate you too, for having been a listener to my ravings just now. Don’t let us play the ridiculous any more, please. I shall go and find mamma.’

They turned towards the crowded amphitheatre, Evelyn leading the way, seemingly indifferent as to whether Ralph followed or not. As for him, the light dazzled his eyes, the braying chorus which had succeeded the ‘Guards’ Waltz’ deafened him, and he was vexed. Perhaps Miss Tennent knew this, and repented a little. At any rate, he found himself all at once face to face with her, and heard her voice saying, with something of appeal in it, ‘Mr. Galton, some day, if mamma can get over her dread of the water, we will go for the sail you spoke of. Good-night!’

She held out her hand to him, and then went away. Ralph had a glimpse of the count’s figure rising to follow him as he turned to leave the promenade. He had a sort of indistinct consciousness that an arm was thrust through his own, that he was led unresisting among winding paths, shrubs, and grottoes, while the distant music mingled oddly with the never-ceasing tramp over the bridge, and the red spark of Richard Galton’s cigar flashed before him from time to time, as the count took it from his lips to tell some fresh anecdote of Lady Julia’s powers of finesse. But the captain knew all this very vaguely indeed, and he only roused himself with a start when his cousin stood suddenly before him in the path and barred his progress.

‘You are bad company, amico, and I’ll go,’ said the count.

He bent forward a little as he spoke, and his small black eyes gleamed into Ralph’s with an expression of intense mischief.

‘Have a care of the Capriote, Ralpho mio. There’s an ugly story that she was engaged to some poor fellow, and has jilted

him for a greater match. You and I know that the Lady Julia would manage this, don't we? A clever woman, very. A rivederti.'

CHAPTER IV. ON THE CASTLE CLIFF.

THERE was a concert in the Assembly Rooms at the Spa, and the promenade was thinner than usual. Captain Galton sauntered about amongst the flowers up above, trying to make up his mind. He had a cigar in his mouth, and every now and then the red spark at the end would go out while he stopped to smile down into the turf at his feet, like a modern Narcissus, only the image that he saw there was not his own. And at times, something troubled this image—a momentary cloud only, which just darkened it to his eyes, and then vanished. It was the speech which Richard Galton had made some nights ago when he parted from his cousin in disgust at his lack of attention. Not that Ralph believed it. He thrust the idea from him with supreme scorn when it obtruded itself upon his brighter dreams. But the thing was, it would obtrude itself. He couldn't forget it. He hated the possibility that gossip should dare to take Evelyn's name upon its lips and slander it. For if such a thing as that of which the count had spoken were true, she could be no love of his. But it was not true; he had but to call up her face as he saw it at times, open and frank, and beautiful exceedingly to him, and the doubt fled away vanquished. Some day, he thought, he might tell her this idle story, and laugh at it with her. They had met very often in these last few days, and the count, gazing on the sort of mental paralysis which had seized his cousin, so far as the outer world was concerned, shrugged his shoulders with a moody 'E sciolto,' and almost despaired. He did not know that even now fate was about to play a single stroke in his favour. Captain Galton suddenly flung away his cigar, and started at a quick pace to walk up the Castle Cliff. He had been idle all day, and he wanted a good stiff climb, and space and solitude to think it all over once again. He passed the one-armed sailor with his miniature ship, not stopping to talk as he usually did, but pressing on as though he had some object to gain in reaching the summit before him at a given moment. He stood on the broad summit of the cliff, and leaned back against the iron railings, with his hat off, and the wind blowing fresh about his head. Again he saw

the lights begin to spring up in the fishing-boats on the bay, and the moon come out from a cloud and shine down upon them as it had done when Evelyn touched his arm to make him look. He was thinking of her, of the count's words, which did so haunt him, and of a possible future, when he turned his head and saw a figure coming from amongst the ruins in front of him. An odd feeling of uneasiness began to steal over the captain. He had no time to wonder what it meant, for the figure came on hastily. It was a man, hatless like himself, but with a face that looked haggard and wild in the moonlight, and with bloodshot eyes that seemed to see only one spot in all the waste of water far away below the cliff.

Captain Galton was a brave man, but there was something in this wild figure and its mad rush towards the iron railing—all that separated it from the precipice beyond—which made him draw his breath sharply, with a vague sensation of terror—not altogether for himself. It flashed upon him suddenly that the man was about to throw himself over. There was no time to think. Instinctively, Ralph started from his leaning posture and stood between him and the railings.

‘Are you mad?’ shouted Ralph. ‘Stop!’ There was a single violent word in answer, and Ralph Galton saw the stranger fling up his arms and spring forwards on one side of him. The next moment the two had grappled with each other. Ralph felt the hot breath on his cheek, and the two arms close round him like a vice; but the country squire had been too well trained to be taken by surprise. For a few seconds he stood his ground firmly, and then all at once the man’s grasp relaxed, his arms dropped heavily, and he stood back staring at his opponent with an expression of rage and hatred. The moon shone full on the two faces; Ralph’s a little paler than usual, but steady and composed; the stranger’s haggard and gaunt, with dark hollows under his eyes, and a quiver of suppressed passion about his lips.

‘You!’ he cried out at last, raising his hand and shaking it at the captain. ‘I knew it would be so. A fit meeting. You miserable cowardly villain! I wish I had a pistol, that I might shoot you like a dog. I swear I would do it, if they hanged me for it.’

He went a little nearer and peered up into Ralph’s face of amazement with a fierce sneer.

‘I saw you with her last night,’ he said between his teeth. ‘O, it was pleasant! honeyed moments, were they not? Just so she used to smile on me before you came and bought her with

your pitiful money. You poor dupe, you fancy she cares for you. I tell you it's a lie. She loves me—me, a poor devil of a younger son, who had nothing but his love to give, and so she sells herself to you. No, I'll not punish you; the punishment is enough. Fool! you may take her to your home, but her soul is mine to all eternity.'

Captain Galton stood stunned and helpless as this strange flow of words fell from the man's lips. The dark ruins, and the grass, and the distant light, all danced before his eyes in one confused mass, and the only thought that stood out clear before him was this: Richard Galton's tale was true. He never stopped to reason about it. The terrible earnest and reality which burnt this man's words into his heart left no room for mistrust or hope. For a little while the two stood there facing each other, and then the reaction which follows such stormy passions as his came upon the stranger, and he staggered to the railings, and sank into a sitting posture with his forehead in his hands.

'Why did you stop me?' he said. 'It's cool down there, and my head is on fire. I am quiet enough now; the devil is gone out of me. Leave me to myself, if you are a wise man.'

Ralph was silent a moment, and then he bent his white face down close to the hands which looked so cold and bony in the moonlight.

'As you are a man,' he said, in a low voice, 'as you shall answer for every word spoken here, was she your promised wife?'

'I swear it.'

'And she—threw you over—for me?'

'For your money, you fool! Go, I tell you, while I am quiet, and free me from this devilish torment. Hush! who's that?'

Ralph started back, for a hand was put on his arm drawing him away, and a third voice broke the spell, which tempted him still to question.

'I didn't mean to be a listener,' said the count gently, 'but come away now.'

Like a man in a dream, Ralph turned and went down the hill with his cousin. He hardly knew indeed where he was going or what it was that had happened; he only felt that terrible dead weight of oppression; of something in the background which he must think over by and by, when he should be able for it; that shrinking of the soul from such an examination, which comes upon us with some heavy and unlooked-for blow. Half way down the hill the hand on his arm grew heavier with

a momentary pressure, and the count spoke, a novel gentleness in his tone.

‘Poor old boy!’ he said, ‘I’m sorry.’

Ralph turned with a sudden bitter and unaccountable irritation, and shook him off.

‘Leave me to myself, Dick. I don’t want pity, and there are times when a man can’t brook being worried.’

The count walked on, and Ralph, leaning against the wall, watched the round balls of light far away on the promenade, and heard once more faintly the music of the ‘Guards’ Waltz.’ Was *she* amongst that dim throng of moving figures? Only last night they had talked together beside the sea wall; and a dull sense of self-contempt came over him as he remembered his own happiness at being near her. With a common spirit of self-torment, Ralph left his position and went to walk up and down amongst the gay people on the promenade. He would go over it all again; he would call back the dream which had made that place of bustle and glitter so sweet a paradise to him; he even sought out the exact spot where Evelyn had stood listening to him the night before.

‘False!’ cried out Ralph, with a silent inward cry. It was all he could say or think. The word was stamped upon everything he saw, in his bitterness. False—to her lover, to him, and to herself; false and mercenary.

‘Like the rest of the world,’ he said aloud, turning from the sea; ‘I’ve done with it.’

Some one looked up into his face astonished, but he did not care. What were appearances to him? What was life—what anything?

‘Dick,’ said the captain, coming suddenly upon his cousin that night, ‘let us go. Lady Julia must have a farewell card, and then for Egypt or Panama, California or the Catacombs; but the farther away the better. I’ll never see Old England again.’

CHAPTER V. E SCIOLTO.

NEVER again. Away from it all, and forget it. What was this foolish dream of a few weeks, that it should wreck a life like his? Captain Galton walked up and down the platform, glancing aimlessly into the carriages of the train that stood wait-

ing its time. Not that he cared about choosing his seat ; but he was restless and miserable, impatient to be off ; and he could not stand as the count did, to all appearance absorbed in the conversation which was going on briskly between the station-master and some of the passengers. Chancing to look at his cousin, however, Mr. Galton's attention was caught by the expression of his face ; it had a strangely eager look ; the nostrils were dilated and the thin lips compressed. Ralph's eyes rested upon him with a languid wonder : and when he looked up and saw them he started, and went hurriedly to meet his cousin.

'Not there,' he said sharply, as the captain paused. 'Take the next, Ralph ; we shall have it to ourselves.'

Again Ralph looked up at him wondering. The gentlemen to whose conversation Richard Galton had been listening had chosen the carriage before which he stood, but in a general way the count liked to have fellow-travellers. A fit of perverseness seized the country squire.

'This is as good as any other,' he said, getting in. 'It doesn't matter to us about being alone.'

The count, biting his moustache as he followed, muttered once more between his teeth, 'E sciolto,' and threw himself back upon the cushions. The other occupants of the carriage continued their talk, but Ralph was staring vacantly into the flat expanse of heath and moorland through which the train had begun to move, and he paid no attention to them. All at once, however, a sentence caught his ear, and made him turn away from the window.

'They think he must have thrown himself from the Castle Cliff. A one-armed sailor that stands at the gate begging saw just such a figure go up the cliff late in the evening.'

Then Ralph leaned forward and asked a question.

'Yes. I wonder you didn't hear of it,' was the reply. 'The whole town was talking of it when we came away. He was a lunatic, you see, and had managed to get away from his keeper somehow. A fishing-smack brought in the body early this morning.'

Ralph shot a glance at his cousin ; but the count's eyes were closed, and he seemed to be asleep.

'It's a romantic story too,' proceeded the gentleman. 'The poor young fellow was engaged to be married, and the lady threw him over for a rich merchant. They say he had been mad ever since, always searching for his rival, and imagining every stranger that came in contact with him to be the man.'

The captain's hands were pressed tightly into each other, and he spoke again slowly.

'And—the lady ?

'O, she has been married some time. The daughter of an Irish peer—poor, of course ; so it was best for her. This young fellow was only reading for the bar. I forget the name—Warrenne or Warrington, I think.'

Again Ralph glanced at his cousin, and he saw that the sleep was sham, and the count was furtively watching him out of the half-closed eyes. An angry spot came into Captain Galton's cheeks, and he turned again to the flat landscape, thinking with desperate impatience what a mad fool he had been. His fellow-passengers talked on, but he heard nothing more. The count, watching him, saw once or twice a suppressed quiver about his lips, which boded, he thought, no good to himself ; and Richard Galton sighed, for he had done a mean trick to no purpose. When they reached York, the captain sprang out with an impatient 'At last !' and on the platform he turned to his cousin.

'Dick, you have played me false. You knew all this, and never told me.'

The count shrugged his shoulders.

'I only knew this morning. You were half cured, amico ; why should I interfere to bring back the disease ?'

'Our ways are different henceforward,' said Ralph briefly.

He walked a few steps down the platform, and then hesitated. The same impulse must have moved the two men ; for when he paused and looked back, he saw that the count had stopped also, and was looking after him with an unusual wistfulness in his face. Ralph went back and held out his hand.

'I can forgive you, Dick, sooner than my own rash credulity. We may never meet again, and it won't do to part like this.'

'You're a good fellow,' said the count, with an odd mixture of pride and humility ; 'and I wish you all the happiness that I would have kept from you if I could—that is, if it *is* happiness, which I doubt. And so good-bye, old fellow. You'll hear from the Nyanza yet.'

'Come back with me,' said Ralph, with sudden compassion.

The count shook his head. He knew that he was not wanted ; and the life that he saw stretched out before his cousin would not suit him. He was one of that restless tribe to be met with occasionally here and there about the Continent or the remoter corners of the world ; at home in all scenes, yet never at rest ; he will wander from place to place a solitary man, until age or

disease comes on, and he creeps away, sick and frightened, to some wayside inn, to die amongst strangers, alone as he has lived.

But Ralph had little thought to spare for the wandering count. His mind, which had been so wavering when he took that walk up the Castle Cliff, wavered no longer. He knew now what this chance that he had so nearly flung away was to him. Under the lamps on the promenade he told Evelyn Ten-
nent the story of his encounter, and another story, as old as the hills, but always new. And I think it would have done even the count's impassive heart good to see the radiant look which beamed on Lady Julia's poor tired face as she sat under the colonnade that night and knew that the future baronet was won, in spite of all those absurdly romantic ideas with which her youngest daughter had been wont to drive the poor lady to despair. Then comes the national anthem, and the bustle is greater than ever; then the promenade is deserted, the lights are out, and nothing but the perpetual hush of the sea breaks the silence.

OUR BRILLIANT FAILURE.

A Sketch in Ultramarine.

READER, my name is Coodler. Having unbosomed myself to this extent, I need have no compunction in adding that I have a wife, a family of two interesting children, a snug business, and have been recommended to try Banting. By this you must not imagine that I am fat : I am only comfortable ; my angles are pleasantly rounded, and I haven't a wrinkle on my chubby countenance. I am of a good temper—my wife once termed it *seraphic* ; but since my recent visit to the seaside, I am afraid she has not been able to apply that extravagant term with the same consciousness of its correct significancy as before we—but there, I mustn't anticipate.

Immersed in business from ten till five, it is not to be wondered at that I look forward to my annual holiday with, if I may be allowed the expression, my mental mouth watering. I am quite aware that there is no such thing as a mental mouth, though why there should not be, when we have Shakespeare's authority for the existence of a 'mind's eye,' I can't say. But I never had a very great opinion of poets. I have had one or two on my books before now, and they are not punctual in their payments ; far from it. Well, as I was saying, when the weather begins to grow warm, I find my place of business insupportable. I soon begin to grow warm myself, and a very small amount of sunshine and exertion overcomes me. My wife is something of the same temperament, and she also longs annually for the seaside ; for we don't consider a mere visit to the country an 'out.' We like fields, and hedges, and cows, and all that sort of thing ; but we can have all that if we drive to Richmond or Epping Forest. What we want is a sniff of the briny, the bracing salt air, the clammy sticky atmosphere, that makes you feel uncomfortable

and happy. I am vulgar in my tastes, and delight in Margate. Some people say they like to go to the seaside for quiet. Very good; let 'em go. I prefer noise. I hate quiet. I like niggers. I like Punch. I like the Jetty; and as for your Esplanades and dulness at your fashionable places, they are not in my way, and that's the honest truth. Now in her heart my wife delights in Margate too. Why, we went there when we were courting, and so the place has a sort of charm for both of us.

But when I suggested Margate this year, you should have seen the expression on my wife's face. It was grand. I knew what it meant. We have lately grown acquainted with Mrs. Mackintosh of —— Square, and a very genteel lady she is, and mighty grand notions she's imbued my wife with—horror of Margate being one of them.

'Mrs. Mackintosh tells me that Margate is unbearable this season; such a set of people!' said Mrs. Coodler to me when I mentioned my favourite haunt.

'Bother the people!' I replied; 'I suppose you want Brighton with the sun in your eyes all day, and everybody dressed as if they were going into the Parks.'

'O, dear no!' said my wife, with a toss of the head; 'it's not the season at Brighton yet.'

Pretty changes had taken place in my wife's notions since Mrs. Mackintosh made her acquaintance. She never used to lay such a stress on its being the season: in fact, she was rather partial to the earlier portion of the summer or the autumn, lodgings being cheaper at those times. Well, from Brighton I went through all the seaside places I could think of; but Mrs. Coodler had an objection to them all. I began at last to have serious fears that we should miss our seaside out altogether, for Mrs. Mackintosh had something to say against every place. My wife determined to go nowhere 'out of the season,' so really our choice was limited, as those places whose seasons fell late in the year were out of the question. I must take my six weeks in the summer, you see, and so the Isle of Thanet being shut against us (for Ramsgate shared the Mackintosh denunciation, and Broadstairs I kicked at myself), I began to feel uncomfortable. I at one time imagined that Mrs. Coodler was about to propose Boulogne, in order to come back with a foreign flavour; but she can't even go to Kew by the boat without being ill for the day; and as to my opinion of Frenchmen—well, there, if you want to get my back up, mention 'em, that's all.

As luck would have it, Mrs. Mackintosh's mother fell very

ill about this time, and the genteel friend had to go abroad, which was a great relief to me ; for of all the women I ever knew, she—but there, I say nothing, she's in a foreign land, poor thing, and I can only pity her.

She had gone, it is true, but the genteel viper we had been nourishing in the family bosom had left its sting.

She had recommended Mudville. At present you are, of course, by no means impressed by the enormity of recommending Mudville. You don't know Mudville, never heard of Mudville, and will probably not find Mudville in the map. But wait. Hear more, and, I was going to add, avoid Mudville ; but that advice would be superfluous ; for a description of my visit to and my treat at that den of—but there, again, you'll excuse me, I'm sure, when you have read a few pages further.

We were sitting at tea—a social meal in which I delight—nobody ever quarrels over tea ; it's far beyond dinner in my opinion. We were seated at tea, Mrs. Coodler, myself and Grimley, an old friend. Grimley has a disagreeable knack of making himself universally unpleasant. Were it not for this, he would be a very nice fellow. He is what they call a rough diamond, and takes a pleasure in being rude ; but, as I say, it's his only drawback. 'Pass the buttered toast, Grimley,' I said with a smile, for I was in a good temper, and was eating more than was prudent.

'Sooner keep you for a day than a week,' replied the rough diamond, with his mouth full of muffin.

My wife threw a glance at Grimley that would have annihilated many men, but he didn't notice it.

'You go in for tea as if you were at the seaside,' remarked Grimley, after a pause.

Disagreeable as was the remark, I was grateful to my friend for making it, for I had been longing to touch upon the subject of our summer tour and hadn't known how to approach it. My wife brightened up too, and left off looking black, a thing she always does when Grimley comes. I can't say why, but women are queer creatures, and Mrs. Coodler is no exception to the rule.

'Wish I was at the seaside !' I exclaimed, throwing a side-glance at my wife.

'Ah, indeed ?' sighed Mrs. C.

'Why don't you go, then ?' grunted our agreeable friend.

'That's just it,' I replied hurriedly ; 'why don't we, eh, Jane ?'

Jane didn't know, she was sure. For her part she was ready to go to-morrow.

'Margate again, I suppose,' sneered Grimley: he had a dreadful habit of sneering—all rough diamonds have.

'Margate indeed!' said my wife, with a toss of her head. 'O dear, no! no more of your Margates;' then, after a pause, she added with most irritating emphasis, '*nor* your Rams-gates.'

Now this was quite uncalled for, as we had never stayed at Ramsgate, nor had I suggested that we should.

Grimley had always abused Margate. Now, however, he espoused the cause of that charming place and praised it beyond measure.

'Got too grand for Margate, I suppose, Coodler,' he observed, taking another cup of tea—his third.

'No I haven't,' I replied indignantly. 'Give me Margate before all the watering-places in England, ay or Wales either, if you come to that;' and I brushed the crumbs off my shirt-front with an indignant sweep of my hand, for I was (though seraphic) beginning to get a little put out.

'Margate's low,' jerked out my wife with a scowl at Grimley.

'Too many tradespeople, I suppose,' sneered the rough diamond, with a maddening grin.

'Well, I won't go,' said my wife, bringing down her fist (positively her fist) upon the table, and making the cups and saucers rattle again.

'Go abroad, ma'am,' put in Grimley; 'there's lots of pretty places in Switzerland.'

The puppy! because he had once been down the Rhine with Mr. Cook's party.

'Or America,' he continued, with that horrid smile of his; 'there's all sorts of goings on there now, notwithstanding the war. Saratoga, for instance.'

'And who is *she*, I should like to know?' inquired my wife, whose geography is limited, and, poor thing, she thought it was a female's name.

'O, rubbish!' I exclaimed, wishing to cover her ignorance, 'none of your chaff, Grimley, for it's not required. I shall stay at home, unless it's settled very soon.'

This frightened Mrs. Coodler, I can tell you. She turned pale. I saw the change distinctly—she turned *very* pale, and gasped out rather than spoke the following:

'Mrs. Mackintosh has told me of a delightful place on the

— coast ; a lovely spot, which is hardly known yet ; a wonderful place for children, and very, *very* genteel.’

Reader, a word in your ear. Whenever you hear of a spot being described as a ‘wonderful place for children,’ avoid it. Remember you are not a child, and go somewhere else.

‘And what’s the name of it, my dear?’ I asked.

‘Mudville,’ replied my wife, with a side-look at Grimley, for she suspected he would make one of his vulgar satirical remarks upon it.

‘Well,’ he said, as I knew he would, ‘it sounds very pretty ; quite inviting, I may say ;’ and he chuckled. He had a peculiar chuckle, something like the laugh of the hyæna, only more horrible.

I felt bound to rush to the rescue.

‘I have no doubt that if Mrs. Mackintosh says it’s nice, it *is* nice,’ I observed.

My wife gave me a grateful squeeze of the hand under the table, which brought the tears into my eyes ; for she is a muscular woman, though short of stature.

‘Has she ever been there, mum?’ asked Grimley.

‘No, she hasn’t,’ replied Mrs. C. snappishly ; ‘but she’s friends who have, and I can trust her.’

‘Ah ! can Coodler ? that’s the thing,’ said Grimley, with a twinkle in his evil eye. This was a sly dig at my business, a subject upon which I allow no man to joke. I drew myself up. I am not tall, but even my enemies admit that I am dignified. I drew myself up, and placing my thumbs in my waistcoat-holes, and my head back—my favourite position when desirous of being impressive—I thus addressed the satirical Grimley :

‘Grimley, you are an old friend. As the poet says, “We were boys together ;” but I will not allow you, Grimley, to throw my shop in my teeth in the presence of the gentler sex. Don’t do it again, Grimley, because I don’t like it.’ Then turning to my wife, I said, with a sudden transition of manner from the imperially severe to the domestically gentle, ‘My love, we go to Mudville on Monday.’

Going to Mudville, and getting there, are, I beg to state, two very different matters. The spirit may be willing, but the railway arrangements are worse than weak, the train putting you down at a very considerable distance from your destination.

We started—self and wife, my son Christopher aged nine, my nurse Sarah Naggles (estimable, but warm-tempered), and my in-

fant Roderick—from the station after breakfast, and the train put us down at Muffborough, and left us looking disconsolately at our boxes on the platform, and wondering whether we should get a fly; for we were some miles from Mudville, and we'd a good deal of luggage—we always have. We didn't wonder long. The Interesting Stranger soon ferreted out a fly, and a pretty specimen of a fly it was.

But first, touching the Interesting Stranger. He was a remarkably good-looking person, that is for those who admire tall people—I don't; little and good's my motto. He had a slight tendency of blood to the nose; but, as my wife remarked, that might be constitutional; he had very large and certainly very bushy whiskers, though they were not things I ever admired much, looking a good deal like blacking-brushes, I think; and though I've not the slightest symptom of 'em myself, I don't envy those who have 'em, not I. He parted his hair down the middle (an idiotic fashion, only fit for women; but that's neither here nor there); and he wore his seaside hat in a jaunty manner, and was altogether rollicking, and perhaps a trifle vagabondish-looking. However, I never judge a man by his appearance, and I must admit he was very polite. He talked politics to me, for he got into the same carriage with us as we were starting, hoping he didn't inconvenience us, and not shying the least bit at the baby; he handed my wife the paper; he snapped his fingers at Roderick; and he threw Christopher into convulsions by showing him some tricks with halfpence, and imitating the man who came round for the tickets. We were quite delighted to hear he was going to Mudville; we were sure of one pleasant acquaintance there, at all events. I never saw my wife so pleased with anybody in my life, for she generally puts on a haughty way with strangers, which I have heard before to-day described as 'queenly'; for she is chary of making acquaintances, and never forgets her family, who, between ourselves, were against her marrying me, especially her uncle Benjamin, who was a something or other under Government in foreign parts, and came home with a pension, and no liver to speak of. Aristocratic in a small way was Mrs. C. before she condescended to smile on Christopher Coodler, I can tell you; and she had refused a half-pay officer, a young man high up in the Customs, and a distiller with a beautiful house at Brixton, previous to my popping the question. So, considering all things, I was surprised to see how affable she was with the Interesting Stranger bound for Mudville. When the Interesting Stranger—who, to save trouble, I will, if you

don't mind, denominate I. S.—found us ruefully eyeing our luggage at the station, he smilingly came to our assistance, and pounced upon a fly like—like a spider. Then he helped to pile our luggage on to the roof, and bullied and cajoled the stupid driver into an almost wakeful condition; and so at last we found ourselves on the road to Mudville, and later on *at* that retired spot.

Mudville was one of those places that beggar description. It was small and melancholy; a wretched little—but there, I won't attempt it. We had been recommended to the apartments of Mrs. Grogrum, and thither we drove.

Mrs. Grogrum's front apartments looked out on to the sea, and by an ingenious arrangement the builder had contrived that the back windows also gave you a fine view of the ocean. Mrs. Grogrum's house was built diagonally (I think that's the word), and it seemed to me to catch every wind that blew. It was plentifully supplied with windows too, and they rattled delightfully without ceasing.

Mrs. Grogrum was a fiery-faced female, with the most obtrusive black 'front' I ever saw. I believe that front to have been made of horseshair, it was so shiny, stiff, and undeceptive. From a casual glance at the rubicund features of Mrs. G., I came to a hasty conclusion that she was addicted to ardent liquors. I was not surprised at this, as it is not altogether uncommon with brandy-and-watering-place landladies. Pardon my humble joke, it shall be my last. The instant we were settled (though we were a long time coming to terms with the one-eyed fly-driver, who was pertinacious, insolent, and apparently in a chronic state of inebriety), my wife went out to see what we could have to eat; for she is a good manager, is Mrs. Coodler, and I don't know a better judge of butchers' meat or fish. So she started off with the view to seeing the tradespeople, whilst I remained to settle myself. Settle myself, indeed! I hadn't got through the first half of my police reports (a part of the paper for which I have a weakness, I admit), when a loud tap was heard at my door, and before I had time to say come in, the form of Mrs. Grogrum blocked up the entrance, and stood quivering with some strong emotion. I have before observed that I am beneath the middle height—a good deal beneath it—I am also a peaceable man, prone to let things take their own way, and with a sublime respect for 'peace and quiet.' Consequently, I will admit that the quivering frame of Mrs. Grogrum flustered me, and I felt a sudden palpitation and a general trembling, which was not lost upon the

landlady, whose quivering increased, and whose features became, if possible, more fiery, as she saw me quail beneath her luminous eye.

'O sir,' she blurted forth, making a sharp bob, 'asking your parding, but is Mrs. Coodler to cook your mealses, or am I to do 'em? I merely wish to know, to save confusion for the futur.'

I stared. It was the only thing I could do at the moment, and I did it.

'I repeat, sir, which is to do 'em?'

'Why, Mrs. Groggins—'

'Grogum, sir, if *you* please,' was the lofty reply; for I'd called the woman by a wrong name in the agitation of the moment.

'Rum, by all means,' I responded with a touch of humour.

She looked daggers at me, but luckily, like the gentleman in the play, 'used none.'

'For Mrs. Coodler, she come into my kitching and made remarks. Now I'm missis in my own 'ouse, I do 'ope, and I am *not* a going to have strange ladies a coming and a poking their noses, and a prying into *my* kitching, and a making remarks about my domestic. Mrs. Coodler comes into *my* kitching, she does, and requestes to look at my frying-pan, and speaks sharp to my domestic as doesn't bring the frying-pan instantaneous; me being missis in my own 'ouse, and not lodgers, nor never will as long as my name's Maria Grogum. No. Imperent curiosity is what I won't stand, because it flusters me; and one as wishes to do her dooty to parties as takes her apartments, can't be flustered and do her dooty at the same time. So what I says, sir, is, if your good lady is a going to cook, let's know at once, and the sooner we parts the best for all concerned; but if I'm to do the cooking, why then let Mrs. Coodler keep herself *to* herself; a making her complaints when proper, *of* course, but *not* a coming a prying about in parties' kitchings and a asking to see frying-pans.'

I believe that if a violent fit of coughing had not taken Mrs. Grogum, she would have been speaking still. However, she coughed and curtseyed and quivered herself gradually out of the room; and mentally determining to look for fresh lodgings as soon as possible, I again attacked the great embezzlement case at Bow-street. But I was not to get beyond the third paragraph uninterrupted. Again the door opened, and again a form quivered with passion upon the mat.

This time it was not Mrs. Grogrum, but her servant of all-work, Susan, or as she called herself 'Shoozan.'

Shoozan had a round rosy face, and round rosy elbows; she had red hair, and was freckled in reckless profusion. She could not, even by her most ardent admirers, have been considered a 'neat-handed Phyllis.' The number of grates she black-leaded weekly was evidently overwhelming, when compared to the ablutionary exercises she indulged in. In short, she was 'grimy' to the last degree; and she wore black stockings, and a black cap, both of which articles I would abolish by act of parliament, if I could. Shoozan was bursting with some strong grievance; so I laid down my newspaper and waited to hear her story.

'Please, sir,' she gushed out after an inward struggle, 'would you like to be called a nuzzy?'

Now I don't think I *should* like to be called a nuzzy. I have no notion what it means, but it sounds insolent. Before I could reply, however, the girl burst forth again, 'And if she expects as I'm going to take the children's dinner up to the top of the 'ouse, she's mistook.'

Here Shoozan wagged her head about defiantly.

'My good girl,' I said, for I always feel for servants in lodging houses, poor wretches! but the kindly tone of my voice was too much for her; she burst into a vehement boo-hoo, and wept loudly. Beauty in tears is all rubbish. Those poets again! Beauty blubbering looks frightful, with a red nose and swollen eyes. Even the plain domestic looked plainer after wiping her eyes with her apron.

'It's very hard to be called names, a poor girl as never see her parents.' Here she burst out again.

'There, go along,' I said; 'Sarah shall see to the children's dinner;' and with a parting howl Shoozan retired.

What a time my wife seemed away! Again I attacked the embezzlement case, and this time I got as far as the magistrate's request if the prisoner had anything to say. But no further.

The door again burst open, and Sarah Naggles stood before me. Sarah Naggles, than whom there is not a better nurse and a more abominable temper in Britain, stood there, shaking a thousand times more than Grogrum. In a tremulous point of view the landlady was a mere blancmange compared to Sarah, who was a downright 'shivering mountain.' For some seconds she could not speak: at length she did—loudly.

'Mr. Coodler, sir, I wish to leave your service at once, sir, on the spot.' Here she selected a stain on the drugget to stand

upon, thereby adding, as she evidently imagined, force to her remark.

‘Good gracious, Sarah!’—

‘It’s no use your trying to look dignified, sir. When Sarah Naggles says a thing, Sarah Naggles means it; and I’m off by the next conveyance.’

I looked round helplessly; but my wife was out still, and until she came back I could say nothing. Sarah could. She was apt to stick on a good many superfluous h’s when excited, and she gave it as her ‘hopinion that the landlady was honly a helderly hignoramus.’

She would have continued in the same strain, but, luckily, my youngest child, with intelligence beyond its years—or, rather, months—took advantage of her absence to fall off a high chair. This necessitated the presence of Sarah upstairs, and a temporary cessation of hostilities.

I was getting tired of being bullied, and I seized my hat with the intention of going out to find Mrs. Coodler. Chancing to look out of window, I *saw* Mrs. Coodler. Mrs. Coodler was in conversation with the Interesting Stranger. Mrs. C. was smiling, the I. S. was smiling. Apparently Mrs. C. was enjoying herself, whilst I—but the contrast was too much, and I admit I was injudicious enough to dash my hat down over my brows. As it stuck tight, and wouldn’t come up again, I immediately repented my rashness, and felt about for the door with a crab-like action, which was appropriate to the locality, but ungraceful.

Suddenly I found myself in somebody’s arms. With a convulsive effort I raised my hat; terror had endowed me with increased strength, and I had a dreadful suspicion it might be Mrs. Grogram.

It was not. It was the one-eyed fly-driver. The one-eyed fly-driver had been drinking, and swayed backwards and forwards, occasionally hiccuping. I asked him his business.

‘Business,’ replied the man, looking round, as if undecided as to how he should continue, then jumping to an indisputable conclusion, ‘ain’t pleasure. What is pleasure to some folks is pain to others.’

The combination of annoyances was getting too much for me. I drew myself up, and assumed a frown.

‘When I clapped my eyes,’ continued the driver.

‘Your eye, sir,’ I replied loftily. ‘Stick to facts.’

‘On *you*,’ said the one-eyed incubus, not noticing my interruption, ‘I said, that’s a gent as’ll stand a glass of summut. But

you didn't now, did you?' and the fellow put his head on one side and leered hideously.

'Most decidedly I did *not*,' I replied proudly.

'Nor ain't going to?' he continued.

'Nor ain't going to,' I replied clinchingly, if I may be allowed the expression.

'Werry good,' said he; 'then *my* mouth's sealed. I had a thing to say' (unintentionally quoting Mr. William Shakespeare, who *was* a poet rather), 'but I won't. I'm not a-going to put my finger in no one else's pie.'

If you could have seen his finger! I did, and have not eaten pie since.

He vanished. I turned my head away shudderingly, and when I recovered myself he had gone.

I was becoming rabid. I was also awfully hungry. My wife came in. I should have received her with an air of sarcastic politeness (any friends of mine who read this will know the style of thing I mean—*my* playfully severe air, you know), but I was broken-spirited by recent trials.

'It's so annoying,' she said, coming to the point at once; 'there ain't a piece of meat to be got in the place; not even a chop to be procured for love or money before to-morrow.'

'Sweet spot!' I murmured.

'And I've been to every shop in the place to get change for a five-pound note; but they say there isn't as much money in the town.'

I smiled sardonically, but didn't speak.

'Then the fishmonger only comes over from Shellborough on Mondays and Fridays, and to-day's Wednesday: and Mrs. Grogrum says her fireplace isn't big enough to roast joints, so we must have all our meat baked; and there's no draught ale that's drinkable to be got here, because there's so little demand for it; and the poulterer's only got one very small rabbit, which is not at all good; and Mrs. Grogrum says she understood we found our own plate—she's only got two-pronged steel forks; and there's a dog next door but one, they tell me, that howls all night; and the windows in our room rattle so dreadfully, that we sha'n't get much sleep, I'm afraid; and there's no lock to the door; and the pillows are like dummies, they're so hard. And so you must put up with an egg and a slice of bacon for your tea.'

The volubility of my wife, culminating in a decided *non sequitur*, was more than I could bear. I seized a chair in my

agitation, and the back rails came off in my hand. This calmed me. I propped it against the wall, with the determination of declaring I hadn't done it, and smiled once more.

'Mrs. Coodler,' I observed (I never address my wife thus except under very peculiar circumstances),—'Mrs. Coodler, I have taken these apartments for a month, and we must try and make the best of them. Fortified by the cheering society of the Interesting Stranger, no doubt you will be able to bear up.'

Mrs. Coodler coloured, and would have replied, but I waved her aside, and went out into the street to see the lions.

The lions! I was not long in seeing them all. There were the six bathing-machines, the 'principal' hotel, the post-office, the library, and—nothing else. The library was an imposing edifice; that is to say, it was a dead take-in. There were no new books whatever, and I refused to be comforted by the *Adventures of a Guinea*: neither could I be brought to properly appreciate the charms of *Pamela*; so I went home again. I walked upstairs, and entering the apartment, found—no, reader, you're wrong for once—not the Interesting Stranger, but a policeman—a regular rural peeler. He eyed me with professional distrust and a calm smile. I swelled with indignation, and tried to awe him, but he was not to be awed.

'Good-morning,' said the policeman familiarly, 'I presume—'

'You *do*, sir,' I replied sharply, in my imperious manner; 'you presume very considerably in entering a gentleman's apartments in this way, sir. Let me tell you, an Englishman's first-floor is his castle, sir. What do you want?'

'You!' replied the constable in a deep tone.

I was becoming accustomed to this sort of thing, and smiled.

'Your name is Dumpton,' said the fellow.

'All right,' I replied; 'have it so, if you like; you must know best.' I was tickled by the atrocity of the whole thing.

'What's the charge? Burglary? garotting? murder? What is it?'

'You come from town by the half arter ten train?'

'I did.'

'Good! A telegram informs me I'm to arrest a party of your description; at least you're near enough the description for me to arrest you. So, without more ado, come on.'

My wife is an excellent woman, and at times her feelings get too many for her. She heard the final speech of the policeman, and with difficulty was dissuaded from flying at him. Such was also the case with Sarah Naggles, who has highly-developed nails, and (in consequence of blighted hopes) nourishes an ab-

normal hatred of 'the force.' Between these two desperate women the one policeman of Mudville would, I am afraid, have come to the most unmitigated grief. He saw his peril, and produced a pair of handcuffs. I confess the sight unmanned me, and I sank into a chair. I produced my card; I pointed to the direction on my boxes; I threatened to write to the *Times*; I explained how ridiculous it would be in a felon travelling about with a family; I pleaded and stormed alternately, but to no object. The policeman had received his instructions; had been directed to us by the malevolent one-eyed fly-driver; had executed his orders; and was deaf to reason, blind to a bribe, and generally stupid and unswervingly upright.

Mrs. Grogum coming in suddenly upon the scene did not improve the tone of the meeting, as may be supposed. She had settled that we 'was no good' the instant Mrs. C. had made rude remarks about her frying-pan, 'a article as a *reel* lady would despise to worrit herself about.' And as for that sylph in the black stockings, Shoozan, she had long ago learnt to place the blindest confidence in the Mudville policeman, who was the model of manly beauty in the eyes of the neighbouring maid-servants.

We were at our wits' end. My wife was frantic, the nurse furious, the children fractious. Wrapped in his panoply of authority and pigheadedness, the policeman alone was calm.

To us (at this juncture) entered blithely the Interesting Stranger. A smile was on his lip, a tear was *not* in his eye. I was about to appeal to him to clear up the mystery, when I observed a remarkable change come over his features. At the same time a change as remarkable came over the countenance of the aggressive constable. He clapped his eye on the figure of the Interesting Stranger, and almost instantly clapped his professional handcuffs on the wrists of the same individual.

The Interesting Stranger answered to the description in the telegram in every particular; and to this day I cannot comprehend the reason for arresting me, for we were not in the least alike. The I. S. was tall, I am—well, under the middle height. The I. S. was good-looking (at least Mrs. Coodler declares so, spite of everything; and he was described by the police reporter as a 'person of fashionable appearance'), and I am, I admit, not striking to look at, though dignified for a short person. The I. S. was not dressed like me either; so altogether it was a muddle at Mudville, and I might have kicked up a great row about it.

Did I stop to have any arguments, to receive the grovelling apologies of Mrs. Grogrum, the trembling beseechings of the obtuse policeman, the solemn assurances of attention and cleanliness from Shoozan, the universal sympathy of the excited populace—did I wait for all this?

Did I?

Did I fetch the one-eyed fly-driver from his favourite haunt, and bundle self and family back to town that afternoon?

Didn't I!

HOW CHARLIE BLAKE WENT IN FOR THE HEIRESS.

HAVE you ever had a bosom friend? By that I don't mean only one on whom you bestow that cheap article called your confidence, but one to whom a half (and the biggest) of the loaf belongs, while a loaf is there; who has the key of your cellar, even though you have arrived at your last dozen; who, in short, may put his hand into your purse, take out the last shilling, and give you the change.

Such friends were Charlie Blake and I. We had been on the same side in all our games at school. We had shared alike in tender years our marbles and our half-yearly boxes from home; and if Charlie was bottom of his class, I was sure to be found 'next boy.' Together we had struggled through Smalls, and conquered Mods; and emerged at the same time from under the shadow of our old college walls, and come together to the Temple (that emporium for younger sons), and gone on struggling for some two or three years at the time of which I write. It might be that deluded relatives had discovered in Charlie and me the germs of undeveloped Eldons; but, alas! briefless barristers we were, even though the down on our cheeks (or rather on Charlie's, for I am a smooth man) had ripened long ago, and grown into dense forests of hair, and briefless we seemed likely to remain. I don't think Charlie and I should have fretted that the world in general did not look upon our genius with a mother's eye, only we were hard-up—very hard-up—so hard-up, in short, that of course bulky papers came to us day by day which decidedly were cheques upon nobody's bank, but only very useless appeals for us to give what we had not got.

So Charlie and I had determined to look matters in the face, and see what could be done. Charlie was leaning on my

mantelpiece, surveying the fit of his coat, and the length of his whiskers, in my mirror, on the day we had come to this determination, while I was in my easiest attitude on one of my easiest chairs, with as good an havannah as Turk or Christian need wish to smoke in my mouth—for, as Charlie wisely observed, if one couldn't pay for anything, why shouldn't one have the best?

Pay! why, we had given over even thinking of paying for some time. Did we not know that had we given a free *entrée* to our rooms, and been left with what only lawfully belonged to us, we should have presented a very primitive appearance indeed?—N.B. I know Charlie had a pair of slippers worked by a cousin; I don't remember anything else. How could we help it? The world would shake us by the hand in an unpaid-for coat; but how would it look if we were strictly honest, and had no coat at all? Query?

'I had rather not sweep a crossing, Arthur,' quoth Charlie; 'for a B.A. it isn't dignified; or even go to the diggings, which some of my countrymen would hardly permit me to do at present—and yet we can't hold on much longer.'

Then Charlie's feelings burst through his waistcoat and came forth in a sweeping anathema against bills, and the rascals who sent them, and the unsatisfactory state of the world in general to briefless barristers, as is the fashion with Oxford men with large views and no income.

'My good fellow,' I observed, throwing away the end of my cigar, 'let us look at the matter in a business-like point of view. Statement of the case: Two worthy gentlemen possessing—'

I paused—for what did we possess?

'Possessing every advantage except those to be derived from filthy lucre—can't get their creditors to credit 'em any longer,' observed Charlie.

'Under which trying and unaccountable circumstance, the second point in view is—what are they to do?'

Men have been known to attempt a joke on their way to the scaffold, but depend upon it, the first sight of the cord puts a stop to it.

Charlie looked grave—so did I. My havannah was done, and there were only two more left in the box.

'The governor has seven babes and sucklings to provide for, and yours as many more: no chance in that quarter,' murmured Charlie.

N.B. Our forefathers were popularly supposed to have held

landed estates somewhere in some bypast time—a belief their descendants held to, on the principle, ‘Tis better to have *had* and lost, than never to have had at all.’

Suddenly Charlie, who had been pensively stroking out his moustachios, was roused by the following remark from myself :

‘Charlie, couldn’t we marry?’

Charlie suspended his operation.

‘Marry,’ he said vaguely—‘what? whom?’

‘Why, a woman who is not only a woman, but an heiress.’

‘But where do they grow?’ said Charlie. ‘It strikes me golden apples are not to be had without presenting a testimonial to the dragon; besides, I have a polite objection to heiresses. They have generally large mouths, haven’t they?’ he added plaintively. ‘However,’ he continued, ‘I suppose one sacrifice is sufficient, so *you* may have her, and I’ll dance at the wedding, with a pocket full of chinking gold.’

‘After *I* have *come* over the dragon!’

‘*Precisely*,’ said Charlie. ‘You wouldn’t expose my tender frame to the monster; besides, you know, you will have the golden hen all your life—only giving me an egg now and then. But she mayn’t like you.’

‘Then she’ll like you, which doubtless you consider far more likely.’

‘*Chacun à son goût*,’ Charlie observed; ‘if I prefer myself, it doesn’t hurt you. But seriously, Arthur, if there’s a chance of my having to engage the young person’s affections, I don’t like it. Hasn’t anybody got a maiden aunt? I possess a mourning ring as a mark of respect from mine—but isn’t there some old spinster bottled up in your family, Arthur?’

Yes, there was such an ‘old spinster,’ in the north of Scotland, whom I hadn’t seen since I was a child in petticoats. She had petted me then, but owing to some feud with my father, all intercourse between us had ceased even before my mother’s death. Was she accessible?

‘North of Scotland,’ quoth Charlie, ‘very good indeed. “Loved you when a boy,” ably worked by a pleader like you—it is just the thing. “North of Scotland:” has she any salmon up at her place? By Jove! I feel ’em bite already. We are as safe as trivets.’

I can’t say I exactly shared Charlie’s exhilaration: but then I was Blondin, and had the rope to cross, while Charlie was safe below; and if I fell, though he might sympathise, he would not feel the bruises; and, depend upon it, feeling the bruises on

your own person, and feeling *for* that person, are two very different things indeed. However, our present life of retirement was not pleasant—to say the least ; so I commenced operations by writing to my relative. It is needless now to write that letter again. There are so many excellent jokes one makes to oneself, after the party is over, and one can't rouse the house to tell them—so many moves the spectator of a game at chess feels he could make, which are neglected. At the time, however, I considered my letter a very fair sample of its class—from a man who had kissed that celebrated Irish stone at Blarney Castle. The letter was posted by our own hands, after dusk, and a bottle of champagne drunk to its success.

‘I want some dress-bags,’ said Charlie to me that evening; ‘shall I order them?’

I muttered something to the effect that it is inexpedient to reckon the number of your brood till your eggs have escaped the casualties peculiar to eggs.

‘Bother!’ said Charlie. ‘What an old curmudgeon you are over the tin! I wish it were *my* maiden aunt.’

‘I wish it were,’ I replied.

A few days passed over eventlessly, except that Charlie and I grew restless at post-hours, and depressed afterwards—except that we were unsuccessfully courted by seedy-looking individuals with unshaven chins, who seemed to grow more particular in their attentions as our engagements from home increased. Being, as I said, low down in my class, I forget how long the siege of Derry lasted, but I know the ships only came in just in time. Would our ship come in? and in time?

Charlie's dress-bags were still in perspective, and allusions thereto rendered him touchy; but the darkest hour is that before the dawn. We had had our darkest hour, and the dawn came. We had been wandering dejectedly in the gardens, and stared at the river through the fog, without being cheered—when, on entering my rooms, I found a letter in an unknown female hand.

‘Maiden aunt,’ said Charlie, ‘my bottle of champagne to the next cigar you have bestowed on you.’

I took no notice of him, but tore open the seal.

‘“Lyryng-grove, Edinburgh.”’

‘Hang it!’ said Charlie, ‘she's removed: ‘how about the salmon?’

‘“MY DEAR BOY,—How I was carried back yesterday to the

time when you were a child at my knee, and I teaching you your letters ! Do you remember that big box, Arthur, and how you would never say anything but B was a butcher, and had a great dog ?”

(‘Pleasing,’ said Charlie. ‘Maiden aunt in evident possession of faculties. Well—’)

“‘Lackaday ! I have no doubt you have forgotten it. I never thought once that my favourite nephew would have let so long a time pass without a word ; but as you say, ‘These unhappy differences have come between us,’ and prevented you seeking me out, for fear of being considered intrusive.

“‘My dear boy, had you no better memory of me than that ? On many accounts I wish you had made yourself known to me sooner. You know—at all events it is so—that I have no near relatives, and I hoped that you would stand in the place of one to me. When I could hope so no longer, and only think you had forgotten your old aunt, I adopted a dear young friend and connection of mine—Mary Mackenzie—(not that she had any need of adoption, in one sense, for she has a comfortable independent fortune) ; but we are both lonely women, and both know that riches have nothing to do with happiness—(‘By Jove ! haven’t they, old lady !’ burst in Charlie)—so we have cast in our lot together, and she is a dear friend and daughter to me. My dear boy, will you come and see me ? I am a foolish old woman to build castles in the air at my time of life ; but still if you *can* manage to arrange your professional duties—(Charlie, irreverently, ‘Can’t he just, you maiden aunt ?)—and will come to see me next month, it will make me happy, and bring back old times. Good-bye, my dear boy.—Yours &c.

“‘MARTHA THOROUGHGOOD.’

“‘P.S. Mary is away now, but returns next week, I believe, and will be prepared to like you.’”

‘O maiden aunt, maiden aunt !’ exclaimed Charlie, ‘thou art shallow as thy nephew’s purse !’

‘Has been, Charlie. You see the times aren’t over when, if some men choose to walk in a new path, they find the road laid down with gold paving-stones. But I wonder what age she is ?’

‘Who ?—the aunt ?’

‘Pshaw !—Mary.’

‘Mary—ah, Mary. Why, considering your female relative’s

powers of subtraction, and the way she alludes to her as a lonely woman, I should say not much below fifty.'

'There's a limit to chaff,' I observed angrily, as I sat down to think of my position.

How Charlie appeased the Philistines I do not exactly know; but they were appeased for the time.

Unshaven chins left off their craving for our society, while Charlie Blake took pleasure in openly parading in regions before marked dangerous, with the graceful ease and assurance of a man who has 'come in' for what he has given up expecting. I say Charlie Blake did this. As for me, I had never felt less exhilarated. Had the golden image in the future only appeared to me in the form of my aunt, I should have been happy indeed; but one's prospects to hang on a woman one had never seen!

I was sitting in my rooms one day, trying to see a bright future through the medium of my pipe, when a letter was brought to me in the writing of my aunt. A wild rush at the seal, and the contents were soon my own. The old lady thought I might like to see a photograph of her young friend Mary Mackenzie, and so she sent me one which had been taken by a friend.

Now, at the time of which I speak, cartes de visite were not; no benignant statesmen with extended forefinger on heavy volume; no smiling Spurgeons at home, or mighty foreign powers displaying quite touching proofs of affection to their families, might be bought for prices not worth mentioning, to repose under cover of gay moroccas on drawing-room tables.

These things were yet to be. So my heart beat loudly as I undid the paper in which lay my future bride.

Did the royal Harry so unclasp the miniatures of his lady-loves? [I wonder, by the way, if poor Anne would have been trotted over on her useless mission if photographs had come in?] At all events, the royal sceptre and crown were not endangered. Alas for me, my all was staked thereon!

I opened the paper! Ye powers! could mortal in the blessed guise of woman be so ugly? This likeness represented a figure of colossal proportions as far as the knees. Her eyes, or rather her eye, for one was wanting, was of that kind commonly denominated a 'wall'; her nose was embellished by a disfiguring scar; while her mouth—had I been in the mood to think of it, it would have permitted a belief in the man who eat the church and eat the steeple. My wife!!

At this moment Charlie Blake came in. I had heard his

laugh on the staircase. He was going to some party, and the fellow had the audacity to come before me in the dress-bags which he had ordered on my fortune. He had some studs, too, I noticed angrily, and a new pin with ruby eyes ; and as he came up, he brought in a perfume (only to be obtained at a great expense) which made me feel, friend though he was, I hated him.

I flung the likeness of my bride at him with a savage laugh, as he came in. He picked it up and muttered, '*Le diable*' out of politeness, I suppose, to a lady.

'Pleasant,' I said, 'considering that is the person on the prospect of my marriage with whom you choose to dress yourself up like a man-milliner.'

'*By Jove*!' said Charlie Blake again.

I hated him more than ever. I said so. I told him to send back his jewelry and his perfumes, for I was not going to be tied to a creature with one eye.

'My good fellow,' said Charlie, 'but you don't know what you're saying ; we'll trust reflection will bring you to a more Christian frame of mind.' So saying, Charlie strolled up to the mirror, tried on two fingers of a glove, murmured, 'I'm engaged to little Lucy for the 4th,' and left me to go to his confounded party.

How selfish men are ! I reflected ; and as I thought of those studs and perfumes, my wrath exploded.

I paced my room, I walked miles over my carpet, and at every square I vowed that I would not have Miss Mackenzie. But what could I do ? Debt and her Majesty's charitable institutions stared me in the face, or—and I gave Miss Mackenzie a passing salute on the carpet for being so ugly.

Charlie returned at three in a provokingly good humour.

The dancing had been a success, supper good, champagne the correct thing.

'I'm glad you've been enjoying yourself,' I said savagely, 'as it seems to me your enjoyments are limited.'

'You don't mean to say,' exclaimed Charlie looking hard at me, 'that you are going to turn us both over ?'

'Yes, I do,' I replied, 'unless *you* have a fancy to become the possessor of—' and I glanced at Miss M. on the carpet ; 'if you have, take her, aunt's fortune and all, and—bless you, my boy.'

Charlie whistled and took up the picture.

'But I wish she had two eyes,' he said thoughtfully. 'It puts a man under a suspicion.'

'She mayn't be so bad, after all,' I added, viewing the case more hopefully.

'It is done by the sun,' mused Charlie (with that belief in photographic power we had at first), 'and that can't be mistaken.'

'O, well, after all, beauty is but skin-deep,' I pursued.

'It's a good thing you hold such views, old fellow. It is simply (don't be hurt) hideous; but we'll trust, seeing this, we know the worst. Come, Arthur, do your duty like a man; or stay, we've lived and suffered together, and I won't desert you, my boy. I'll agree to toss up as to who it shall be.'

'Very well.' I grasped at the straw.

Charlie pulled from the recesses of his pocket a suspicious-looking halfpenny. The golden age had not begun with us.

'Heads!' I faltered.

'Tails!' quoth Charlie, as being more appropriate.

Up went her Majesty's current coin. Down—I felt my heart beat against the table in that moment of suspense.

'All right, old fellow,' said Charlie Blake, 'you've got her.'

I looked. Heads—unmistakably heads.

'Well,' said Charlie, as I continued speechless, 'as it's settled, I suppose I may as well turn in. At all events, it's some consolation to think the young person's affections will probably be at liberty to fix themselves on you. Good night, Arthur, and pleasant dreams.'

The savage left me. 'Pleasant dreams!' I tossed restlessly to and fro till my pillow scorched me. I attacked my water-jug, and again returned to my pillow, and arose, as it was probable, unrefreshed. Days passed on—the appointed hour grew near. I lost my appetite; I lost all interest in the parting of my hair; I went and played with little Tommy Smallwood at long whist for love, for five hours without a murmur. I dined with Smith, and stopped at the second glass of champagne. Altogether, I was in a fair way to alarm my friends. Some men said I had a hopeless attachment (hadn't I?); others, that I had overworked my brain (those who didn't know me); and, as I avoided my friends, so they grew tired of me in my present state. Only Charlie Blake avoided me too, and that cut me. I might be surly to him, but still, under the present circumstances, I thought he would have stood by me. I heard him laughing with Smith on the floor below, possibly at me, and I grew hot at the idea. Wouldn't I pay his debts after my marriage? (An icy shudder crossed me.) And now that he knew I couldn't get out of it, he was basely ungrateful.

It was the evening before my departure, and I was standing helplessly regarding my portmanteau, when Charlie Blake came in.

'All ready?' he said cheerfully. (How easy is such cheerfulness!)

'I shall be in due time,' I replied, in that funeral tone I had adopted.

'But your hair,' said Charlie, surveying me, 'and your garments, and—ahem, pardon me—your general aspect. Really, you look more like some Esau than a Christian of to-day.'

A mirror opposite reflected Charlie's words.

'I am not going to act happy lover.'

'No; but won't she expect it? And so *I* must do it, with your leave.'

I stared wildly.

'Yes, Arthur,' he went on; 'this shutting yourself up, and going about unshaven and unshorn, sounds better than it looks; so, craving your permission, I am going to try for the heiress.'

'But—'

He cut me short: 'My dear fellow, it's no matter of choice; one of us must do it. I am the tougher animal, and if it weren't for the aunt, I should be as right as—'

'Take my name, my identity, what you will,' I said, wringing his hand, 'and may I turn out a more satisfactory fellow to you than I have ever been to myself.'

'All right,' said Charlie; 'and now I must turn in and pack—I suppose I may take the dress-bags in case my heiress dances, without exciting your ire now.'

He shut the door and left me. Did he really think his offer so light and easy? I could not tell. But who would not have a bosom friend after this?

I went to bed and slept as I had never slept since that portrait had first haunted my dreams.

Here ended all personal concern of mine in that unlucky picture. The remaining portion of the story I have no wish to speak about, and leave it to Charlie Blake to tell in his own words.

And so I took Arthur's ticket, and the place which should have been his in the Great Northern train opposite an inflammatory-looking old gentleman in a fur cap, and a spinster getting on in years unmistakably and of a most forbidding cast of countenance. I was attracted by that spinster. Would the

Mackenzie be like her? Would her eyes suggest young gooseberries as unmistakably? Would she wear cotton gloves, and have as strong an appetite for tallow pies? As I made these remarks to myself—I make them and sundry others over and over again—the lady's face grew sterner and sterner. I could not keep my eyes off. At last, she requested me to hand her a corpulent umbrella, upon which I sat oblivious, and left the carriage.

A cold chill seized me. Could that have been Miss Mackenzie? I had seen her ticket, and it was marked Edinburgh. 'The last straw breaks the camel's back.' I was that camel. The idea haunted me also how I should be received at Lyringgrove. I had a story to relate, but I had not acted it on the stage, and I might fail. I read *Punch* as if it were the milliner's bill, and I the father of a family all wearing crinoline. His follies failed to make me smile.

I was uncivil to the young women at the refreshment-stalls. When the old gentleman in the fur cap grew crimson with the heat, I did not offer my seat near the window. What were his feelings to mine?

At last, in the dull gray light of a foggy evening, we reached Edinburgh. Everybody got out. I got out.

'Cab, sir?' said a jolly-looking cabby, who exasperated me by his jovial appearance. Should I wait till morning? No; morning light would make things worse. I gave the address and got in. At every slackening of speed on the part of the gaunt old horse, I felt a tremor. We drove on into the suburbs. There were trees and fields; then an iron gate was opened. We creaked over a gravel drive, and a glow of ruddy light from the windows of a good-sized house said we had arrived.

There is on record the history of a venerable mother of a family who lived in her shoe. Would that I had been acquainted with her secret, and could have retired into that residence! As it was, the entrance of myself (I am six foot one in my boots), my portmanteau, and cabby made a considerable noise in the hall. A most highly respectable and very corpulent flunky stood at the door, before whom, owing to the intense respectability of his aspect I suppose, I actually blushed. At this moment, a little old lady, who, by reason of a narrowness round the base, and a profusion of headgear, reminded me of a well-grown cauliflower, appeared at a door, and rushed towards me. While I stood, doubtful of her intentions, she imprinted an anything but doubtful kiss on my chin, as the only attainable feature.

‘My dear Arthur, my *dear* boy!’ said the little old lady, ‘how glad I am to see you here!’ (In parentheses to hoary-head who stood by, rubicund and serene) ‘Saunders, this is my nephew, Mr. Arthur.’

What could I do? Contradict the old lady to her face? Be turned out by hoary-head as an impostor, and lose all chance of my golden bride? In honour to Arthur I could not. There was too a steaming odour ascending to my nostrils, resembling roast goose unmistakably. At all events I would stay to dinner.

So, with many expressions of affection, the aunt ushered me into the drawing-room. Was my bride there? No. Aunt Thoroughgood was again repeating her expressions of satisfaction at seeing me there—was roasting me at an enormous fire, and feared I was starving, after the fashion of old ladies, when I heard a step in the passage. A lighter step than I should have thought the foot of such a Colossus as the photograph represented would have made. Click went the door. I turned round to meet my fate, and saw instead—not an angel with rosy wings borne on a cloud, but something slightly of the genus in the form of a young and pretty girl, with laughing blue eyes, waving light hair, and most becomingly dressed in—excuse me, ladies, whether muslin or gauze I am unable to say.

Aunt Thoroughgood looked up and sighed. Well might she sigh. It was not policy to introduce me to such a young lady, when I was to fall in love with somebody else.

‘Well, aunt,’ said the young lady at the door, ‘won’t you introduce me to your nephew?’ She smiled so oddly that I stared. Possibly she knew about my coming for the heiress. ‘Miss Murphey—my nephew, Arthur Hamilton,’ and I *was* Charlie Blake. So we went into the roast goose in the other room. I could not regret Miss Mackenzie, with that merry little girl near me, and plenty of ‘victuals to eat and to drink,’ as the song says. There would be plenty of time for ‘the other,’ after a little flirtation with this, before I settled down.

So I enjoyed my dinner. The soup was a testimony to the principles of the Scotch cook, who put in all that was required. The fish had apparently but just left its native element; and the roast goose was everything a goose roasted should be. If I abstained from the stuffing on account of the ladies, I did not regret that abstinence. During the sweets I looked at Miss Murphey, and yet I am anything but a ladies’ man.

I might be a little absent sometimes when I ought to have

answered to the name of Arthur, as the advertisements for lost dogs say. I might feel I was eating Arthur's dinner, and drinking Arthur's wine; but Arthur declined it, and really I seemed to answer the purpose so well, that I thought he was as well at the Temple.

'My dear,' said Miss Thoroughgood, surveying me intensely through her spectacles, as we stood over the fire after dinner, 'how much lighter your hair has grown! When you were a boy it used to be nearly black, and your eyes are lighter too.'

'How very odd!' said Miss Murphey, with another little sly glance out of her eyes at my aunt. 'Do you think he's an impostor?'

An impostor, good heavens! What did the girl mean? I felt I grew red even to the roots of my whiskers; but what was singular was that aunt Thoroughgood turned very red too.

I felt (afterwards) what a good opportunity it was for discovering myself. I think I should have done it, had not thoughts of Saunders restrained me. Imagine his being told to take down Mr. Hamilton's coat at night, and to bring up Mr. Blake's in the morning! However, Miss Thoroughgood dismissed my hair from the subject of conversation, sat down in an easy-chair, and was very soon (God bless her, and preserve the habit in old ladies!) in the land of Nod. So Miss Murphey and I turned to each other.

'I am your cousin,' she observed, looking at me with her blue eyes. 'At least, I am aunt Thoroughgood's once removed, though I do call her aunt.'

Whereupon I observed that we would not count the removes. Truly if Arthur's identity brought me nothing worse than this cousinship, I should be a lucky fellow indeed. Here I demanded whether as cousins we should not address each other in cousinly fashion.

'I think you may,' said Miss Mary, working vigorously at some mechanism in her lap, after the fashion of young ladies, 'as you aren't like what I expected.'

A marvel if I were, I *thought*. I *said*, however, as one isn't always obliged to say what one thinks to a pretty girl sitting near one in a drawing-room:

'Indeed! pray what monster did you expect?'

'O, not a monster at all,' said Miss Mary; 'only a very practical person, a sort of grown-up version of the little boy who hated poetry because it was nothing to eat.'

'A sensible little fellow,' I replied, thinking we were a good

deal alike after all, 'and very like a young lady to condemn one for caring for one's bread-and-butter.'

'O, I daresay it is very *sensible*,' slightly shrugging her shoulders; 'and if I were an heiress, I suppose it would be sensible of you to offer to thread my needles,' she said laughingly.

Whereupon—but this is folly. She told me that Miss Mackenzie had had a trifling quarrel with the old lady, and had gone away for a short time, but would soon be back again.

'In the mean time, cousin Arthur, you must be content with me.'

Could I be content? Ah yes, if it weren't for Arthur and the unpaid debts.

And then Miss Thoroughgood awoke, and we had our coffee. I watched the little figure of Miss Murphey flitting about: she did everything so prettily, even to putting the sugar in my cup, and looked as if she was flirting with the cream-jug. (I did not go so far as to wish myself a cream-jug that night for her sake, after the fashion of Mr. Disraeli's lovers.)

Then Miss Thoroughgood began to grow personal and disagreeable once more.

'My dear Arthur, I was thinking just now about your father.'

'Dreaming, dear, don't you mean?' put in Mary saucily.

'No, Mary, I was not asleep; though you always persist in disbelieving me.—You are like your father, Arthur' (extraordinary coincidence that I should be like Arthur's father). 'There's the same stern look about your mouth when you are grave, as I saw when you thought I was asleep just now.' (A decided proof she had been.)

I only said, 'Indeed!'

'Your father was a stern man, Arthur, when I knew him. Is he altered?' (Confound my father!)

'But little,' I said, and turned to Miss Murphey; but she was eating her bread-and-butter thoughtfully.

'Has time dealt lightly with him?' pursued Miss Thoroughgood. 'Is he gray?'

Was he gray? I felt uncomfortable. I might commit myself, notwithstanding the old lady's hazy recollections, and though the questions were easy. Yet a man must be in very peculiar circumstances to feel as I felt then.

'Slightly,' I observed.

'Well, I *am* surprised,' said Miss Thoroughgood; 'I always thought he would be gray so early.'

I turned to Miss Murphey again, and was silent.

‘And how has Julia turned out?’ continued my tormentor.

I had heard of Arthur’s sisters often, and seen one or two of them, but—he had eight—whether Julia was old or young, married or single, I had quite forgotten. Besides, what was there in Julia to turn out? What could a person turn out? Why, pretty of course. I felt myself growing warm.

‘She has turned out pretty,’ I observed, prompted by my inner man.

‘Pretty!’ cried Miss Thoroughgood, holding up both her hands. ‘Julia pretty! I said Julia.’ (I was silent.) ‘Well-a-day, we never know how to account for tastes. Listen.’ (I was listening, heaven knows.)

Here the old lady dived into her bag, brought out a letter, arranged her spectacles, and began again about that wretched Julia.

‘A friend of mine writes, who saw your sisters at a ball a few weeks ago’ (by Jove! I hoped the correspondent didn’t write often), ‘“Ann and Mary Hamilton looked as handsome young women as any in the room, and were much sought after. Poor Julia certainly doesn’t take after the family. She is unmistakably very plain.”’

‘Tastes *do* differ, aunt,’ said little Miss Murphey, to my great relief. ‘In the mean while, will you take your tea, and let your nephew have his, or he will think as little of my tea as your friend does of Miss Julia’s beauty. You must have a strong attachment to your family’ (turning to me). ‘You grew quite red when aunt said your sister was thought plain. Besides, you know she said she did not take after the family.’

And she looked demurely at her tea.

It *was* disagreeable being somebody else under Miss Murphey’s eyes. However, the aunt’s personalities ceased. Miss Murphey’s tea, though I abhor the fluid, tasted drinkable to me, and I felt tolerably happy, even though I was Charles Blake—in debt—no nearer the heiress—and wasting my time. How I wished Miss Murphey had been that golden image! and how oilily the wheels would have gone then! What a jolly little girl she was! I shouldn’t object to turn Benedict with such an inducement. The next morning saw me established quite as a member of the family at Lyringa-grove. Miss Murphey looked quite as charming as she had done under the lamplight. She was watering her flowers and feeding her canaries, as busy as that little insect whom Dr. Watts hold

up for our example, when I came in. I was not going to be cheated out of my 'good-morning,' though, and waited till she put down her seed-boxes. And then the old lady came in.

I began to act dutiful nephew to her, but Mary pushed me aside, arranged the cushions, and set her up like a ninepin.

'Ah, Mary knows no one can do anything for me like she does,' apologised Miss Thoroughgood.

'Except Miss Mackenzie,' put in Mary, looking ironically at me; and again the aunt sighed. (Was it not a sigh of compassion for me?)

After breakfast, I, who can only be induced into a vehicle behind a thorough stepper—smoking allowed—actually found myself like a domestic animal, with a shawl over my arm, going into a miniature clothes-basket on wheels, which I could have carried with ease, pronged by an enormous hoop (they had just come in again), with Miss Mary beside me, holding the most absurd whip growing out of a parasol.

I couldn't drive such a ridiculous conveyance. I couldn't take reins which seemed made for a rocking-horse; so Mary took them, and drove me, while I creaked in the clothes-basket, and actually felt contented. I came back contented. After luncheon, too, I found myself scratching my hands in attempts at embedded violets in the hedges, which Miss Murphey pointed out at the foot of the banks with her parasol. It did strike me that the parasol generally aimed at those violets which were deepest in nettles; and when I returned, scratched and bleeding, Miss Murphey suggested docking-leaf quite coolly as a remedy.

Still I was content. And was not this contentment dangerous? Was it not? Evening came on, and when the siesta was in process I took up my position at an heroic distance from Mary's pricker. The recollections afterwards were less troublesome, only the aunt would puzzle her head as to which of Arthur's ancestors I had derived my light hair from.

'All the family had dark,' she said, surveying me perplexed. Here Miss Mary came to my aid.

'There are mysteries in the masculine toilet,' she laughed.

And so aunt Thoroughgood's mind was relieved in supposing my hair was dyed! It was come to this!

And yet Mary's tea tasted more like nectar. I felt I could have foresworn beer and tobacco at unseemly hours, held the kettle, or walked out with a poodle in a red jacket for Mary's sake; but, alas, the grapes were unattainable.

So the days passed away. I took to the basket-carriage, and found myself trying to ingratiate Mary's canaries (the feeble-minded creatures trembling and fluttering at my approach, not seeming to take to me). I also found myself looking forward to aunt Thoroughgood's nap, and suggesting sleepy viands to the dear old lady at dinner. She *was* a worthy soul, and did not seem to notice my conversations with Mary. I wished Miss Mackenzie would come; at least—that is, I thought it time. A letter from Arthur suggested it. He wanted to hear how I got on with the heiress. Why didn't I write? Ah! why didn't I? I had nothing to say. Hamlet had not come on yet, though the play was *Hamlet*, and the pit was growing impatient. It was time. I said so twice that afternoon. I had written (though anything but a poet) a stanza to blue eyes in Mary's album—and very flowing lines indeed. I found myself looking at the moon before I went down to dinner, so I took myself to task; and when Mary greeted me with her sunny smile, I refrained from any answering sunshine. During dinner I discussed the subject of drainage with aunt Thoroughgood with the gravity of a whole Board of Health. I saw Mary elevate her pretty shoulders, and for that reason I avoided her glance, and ate my dinner like an alderman. Had I not been looking at the moon? And when a man had advanced to that stage, and the next was impossible, had he not better pause at once? Pshaw! it was time to end this trifling.

So, after dinner, when aunt Thoroughgood had left our company for that other land so distant, I avoided Mary. I went to a distant table, and taking up a great book, I sat down to it. Did not that prove my weakness? Mary put her work by, and came to the table. She did not seem offended. Nay, she had cause for triumph, if she cared for such triumph.

'What have you there?' she said, placing her small fingers on the musty volume.

'*Abridged edition of the Lives of Forty Scotch Divines*, by Job Plasterman.'

'There, I'm sure you don't care for that. Come and play chess with me.'

I did not care for *that*, but I did not say so. However, what could a man do but rise, with musty book on one hand and pretty girl on the other? And yet I felt it was a dangerous game. That seeking in the box for the pieces, with small fingers seeking for their pieces too, followed by the importance of hiding the two pawns behind your back, and the deliberate choice

(Mary and I always made a great deal of this part of the proceeding). As I say, it's a dangerous game. To-night, however, Mary made me put on all the men, chose her hand without any deliberation, and—I missed it.

‘Why did you want to read?’ said Miss Mary, moving her pawn.

Why did I? I could not tell her. Oxford man, and—ahem!—rising barrister though I was, I felt confused.

‘Why shouldn’t I read?’ at length I feebly remarked, and turned her attention to the game.

‘Shall you read when Miss Mackenzie comes?’ persisted Mary. ‘Aunt Thoroughgood heard to-day that she is coming most likely next Wednesday.’

Frantic movements on the part of the gentleman’s bishop; and, goaded to desperation, he says,

‘Hang Miss Mackenzie!’ After all his resolutions too!

‘Arthur, isn’t that rude? But you don’t know her—she’s a very nice person.’

‘I *have* seen her, Mary—Arthur—that is, I saw a likeness of her.’

‘O! Plain isn’t she?’

‘Plain?’ I exclaimed. ‘Hideous!’

I heard a suppressed laugh, but Mary was under the table, having dropped a piece, and when she rose, it was with a vehement ‘Check!’ on her tongue.

I didn’t see it.

‘No, you never do see anything; you are very blind,’ she said, laughing. ‘I don’t know what you will be like when Miss Mackenzie comes; for you know what they say is blind.’

‘Nothing at all appropriate,’ I observed, in a surly tone, thrusting my king on to destruction.

‘Ah,’ said Mary, looking up; ‘but you like heiresses, don’t you?’

What an odious conversation to a man who had come for an heiress! I did hate prying women.

Another mad move on the part of the frantic bishop, and I was checkmated.

I would not play chess any more, I said to myself; and I did not. I ceased to coo to Mary’s canaries. The basket carriage did not creak under my weight, and the pony doubtless was proportionately relieved. Was it only the pony? I did all this for two whole days. I was acting with the usual good sense of Charles Blake, Esquire. I patted that gentleman on

the back. (This is figurative.) I said, 'Well done, Charlie, my boy!' but I could not raise my own spirits thereby; I still said, 'Hang Miss Mackenzie!' mentally, and looked at the moon when I was alone.

And so the day came before that one on which Mary told me the heiress was to come. We were going to a picnic, but I felt very low indeed. Wasn't the apple going to swing over my head for another twenty-four hours? and hadn't I to keep that great fence in view between it and me—all the time? Not all my cigar-bills, unpaid-for coats, dunning brewers, covetous and mercenary tailors, had ever preyed so upon my spirits.

I wasn't Charlie Blake. I was the little longing boy for the plum-cake, and forced to submit to the bread-and-butter. What! did all little boys have butter? and wasn't I content? I cut my chin in shaving, though the sun was streaming through the windows. Even the sight of Mary in a white dress, and a hat with a bird of paradise reposing on the top, did not raise my spirits. What had I to do with birds of paradise, or with anything but the most earthly of the tribe? There was a man, too, with a great deal of red hair, who, aunt Thoroughgood said, was much 'sought after.' He seemed, I thought, on far too intimate terms with paradise. Mary smiled, too, as if she liked him; she shook-out her blue ribbons, and actually seemed pleased (girls have no discrimination) when he paid her a stupid compliment.

More people came, and I was introduced, and I bowed, and smiled, and hated them. I was to drive two girls (by courtesy) in brown, who were to be trusted—and very steady and mature they looked. Red whiskers, who rejoiced in the name of Gushington, was to drive aunt Thoroughgood and Mary. What a fool he looked, handing her into his trap! As if she couldn't get in by herself!

The girls in brown did not belie their sober nature. Their schoolmistress (though it must have been long—very long since they required such a preceptress) might have been guarding them invisibly, and smiling in spirit; nevertheless they might have been desired a trifle more amusing. They—at least the one on the seat beside me, was of a pleasing turn of mind, and seemed grateful for what luck had bestowed on her in the shape of myself, and the back seat. She liked picnics? 'O yes.' And driving? 'O yes.' And a dusty road, with the sun like blazes on her head? 'O, she didn't mind dust or the sun;'—all of which might be gratifying, but not amusing. Happy 'brown ribbons,' who could be happy in waltz or carriage, all uncon-

scious of the feelings of thy partner! When we reached the old abbey (which I thought we never should reach), I was requested to show the brown girl a good point for sketching, and would I take a camp-stool? I was a Christian, whatever my frame of mind might be; and we sat undisturbed till a great bell sounded. Then the young lady, whose time seemed to have been spent in rubbing out, and who was now struggling with the legs of a cow figuratively on her paper, mildly asked, 'Was I hungry?' and as I thought this betokened a desire for a prolonged struggle with the cow, I gave a more truthful than polite 'Yes,' and we descended. I felt angry as I took my place on the grass. Mary told me afterwards I helped to the pigeon-pie, as if I were at war with its contents; and so I was. Wasn't I Arthur's pigeon, and wasn't my own plucking just about to begin?

Mary sat opposite to me, smiling at Mr. Gushington's very poor jokes over the crackers. For my part I see small amusement in crackers, unless indeed you happen yourself to make a particularly good remark.

However, Mary pulled the crackers on one side, and red whiskers on the other, and she laughed because it wouldn't go off—and then it went off, and she laughed again, and then he read the motto, and she laughed again, and gave him the comfit. Why couldn't he pull the thing with somebody else?

I didn't enjoy it. The lady next to me, with a fixed purpose for lobster-salad, was heavy. The brown ribbons reverted to how she should finish the cow after lunch, and was heavy too—while Miss Murphey opposite was not heavy, and I am not the man to look pleasantly at the cold mutton, with the hot roast at the other table spread out for somebody else. I found that champagne may be as uninvigorating as toast-and-water, and that chickens may be tender (and cut-up) without a power to please in their tenderness, even though one hopes to marry an heiress shortly. I had never thought so before. I did now.

I sat long over that cheerless entertainment, until I saw an old lady eye me with suspicion, and then I got up and moved on by myself into a little wood, where—my thoughts being in a medley that afternoon—I wished to avoid the world; so I threw myself on a bed of nettles, and called myself a fool.

'What's done, Charlie Blake,' I observed, 'can't be helped. For the future—' And then down below I saw Mary coming over the stile by herself, chopping off the heads of the flowers with her parasol. So I strolled down my bank, and met her.

'Hasn't it been pleasant,' she said (by the way, I thought her face looked very grave before she saw me—but I wasn't up to young ladies), 'and everybody charming?'

'Meaning, I suppose, thereby Mr. Gushington?—to me he seems an insufferable puppy.'

If ever a girl who didn't talk slang said, 'O you muff!' with her eyes, Mary said so then.

'There are many things worse than puppies,' said Miss Murphey, colouring a little, and continuing to chop.

'I am down—don't hit me, Mary,' said I. 'Do you care for this red-whiskered fellow?'

'They aren't red, Arthur; but—no—I don't care for him' (a little scornfully), and we were silent.

How pretty she looked! I had made-up my mind that I would go away without a word—but I could not—so I 'did it.' I told her how I had come for the sake of the heiress who was to help us, and what a poor wretch I was, with a cartload of debts hanging about me—and how before the heiress had come, she being there—I—&c. &c., and how useless it was. But though I could not make love to her, I would not stay and make it to any one else. I would leave to-night, and try if there was nothing else but an heiress who would help to roll this heavy load away from us.

Her blue eyes had a curious look in them when I paused. The worst had yet to be told.

'Arthur,' she began.

'Stay, Mary,' I said, and I felt a blush on my face, 'I am not Arthur.'

'Not Arthur—not my cousin?'

She started back as if she were about to cry out 'Murder!' or 'Mr. Gushington!' but looking at me as a preliminary measure seemed to reassure her.

Then I told her the rest,—how Arthur had grown ill over the photograph, and I had taken his place. How every one had greeted me as Arthur, and I had been too cowardly to face an explanation. Then I asked her if she would not accord to Charlie Blake the grace she would have given her cousin? I had freely confessed—

'And expect to be as freely forgiven, I suppose. Well, I don't see what else you can do, though it was very wrong. There is one condition, though, to the act of grace.'

'Well, what was it?'

'You will stay till Miss Mackenzie comes for an act of

penance. You are not obliged to make love to her, you know.'

'Thank you,' I said ; for I confess to a feeling of disappointment at the cavalier way in which she had treated my offer. I felt piqued. What can a man offer more than his hand, even though that hand be an empty one ?

She might be prudent ; perhaps she deemed such a hopeless attachment not worth alluding to ; still, though prudence is doubtless an estimable quality, yet a man may desire other qualities in his fair one. Something seemed to amuse her too. We were hardly out of the wood, when, standing still, Mary burst forth into a peal of silvery laughter. 'I cannot help it, Arthur ; pray forgive it.'

I felt angry in my heart at her ; and I think Mary saw my disappointment and anger, as we silently joined the rest of the party. I was glad to get back—glad with a negative gladness, when I put my companions again under the maternal wing. There was nothing more to be done now. I went upstairs and packed my portmanteau. This was the first time I had meddled with young ladies, and it should be the last. O, you wise Solomon ! What a world this would be if your thoughts and your acts were the same !

I had only to say good-bye to aunt Thoroughgood (London being unable to settle its lawsuits without me would explain matters in that quarter), and to bid that—young person farewell—who would doubtless hold out her pretty hand, smile, and go out to gather violets with that puppy Gushington five minutes afterwards.

As I went downstairs a servant met me—not Saunders, but one of the housemaids—saying I was wanted in the library.

'Who is there ?' I inquired.

'Only Miss Mackenzie, sir,' Susan replied.

'Only Miss Mackenzie !'

Well, really, this was making a dead-set at me. *She* couldn't be going to propose !

I would represent my forlorn condition in very plain terms if I saw a chance of it. Hang it ! I wished I had gone straight off. I didn't wish Arthur at the Temple now.

I went into the room, but there was no one but Mary.

'Some one told me Miss Mackenzie had come,' I said.

'Thank goodness she isn't come—I hate seeing the woman !'

'Hate seeing the woman !' said Mary, with a little smile which I couldn't make out, and a bright colour in her cheeks.

'Are you sure she isn't here, Arthur—I mean Mr. Blake—hovering about you in the shape of an invisible spirit?'

For once in my life I stared.

'You won't notice her,' she went on, 'even though she is before you. It was not fair that you should not be Arthur, and I myself. You are not like the knight in the fairy-tale, Mr. Blake, who found out the lady even after she was changed into the cat, from the depth of feeling in her mews.'

'But the photograph?' I murmured feebly, not being myself. Indeed, an infant, so to speak, might at that moment have knocked me down. 'Who was that?'

'I assure you,' she said, smiling, 'it was I—only done by an amateur.' (God bless him! I mentally added.) 'I stood too near—that made me look so gigantic, and then I moved—that deprived me of an eye.'

'We said you were like the Sphinx pyramid, Mary.'

Mary laughed.

'They said it was not like me, and so I sent it. I thought it would frighten all the crows away; and when I heard you were still coming, I thought I would rely upon it *not* being like me. I had a struggle with dear aunty's idea of deceit. She has had many a sigh over me; but as the servants all call me "Miss Mary," I was safe:—and so—and so I will forgive you for all the pretty things you have said of me to my face, and will never do so any more.'

And then I stood before her, not knowing what to say—wasn't the prize too great?

'Mr. Blake,' said Mary, coming towards me, and shyly holding out her little white hand (which it is needless to say was soon in another larger and browner one), 'you asked me something this afternoon—shall I answer it now?—or do you still "hate the woman"?'*

Did I hate the woman? No, I don't think I did. I had loved her for herself, and she knew it—so I did not go away.*

I don't know what Arthur's feelings were when he saw my pretty bride, because I only thought about my own at that time. He had, however, a well-made coat on at my wedding, which was paid for—but—he did not dance—he sat apart, and somewhat gloomy.

I keep the ugly photograph; for I can never forget what I gained and Arthur lost by amateur photography. Here we may drop the curtain.

A ROMANTIC INCIDENT.

CHAPTER I.

A MAN has very hard work in the International Finance department at Somerset House. From ten to one I have to sign my name some thirty times, and to make myself familiar with the heads of the department by sketching their countenances on the blotting-paper. It is imperatively necessary for the balance of power that I carefully peruse the *Times* every morning. If people call on business, I never forget what is due to official life so far as to be able to give them any information on the subject. Luckily reformers and the economical adjusters of the estimates have not yet found any abuses in the I. F. department, so that I luxuriate in countless rolls of red tape supplied at the public expense, and sip the brown sherry a grateful country furnishes for the leisure hours of its overworked financiers with all the complacency of the Poet Laureate.

One morning in 186—, after having successfully adjusted an impending crisis in the national credit of an European principality, and guarded against an over-issue of paper-money by the King of Dahomey (the House never gives us fellows the glory of these operations, it all goes to the Ministry), my eyes fell upon the following announcement in the obituary of the *Times* :

‘October 6. The Rev. John Gibbons, Rector of Ashton, Herts, aged 67’

I did no more work that day. When a telegram from the Prime Minister begged me at once to see to a treaty of commerce being concluded with the United States, I flung the missive to a sub.

Soon after I sauntered out and strolled down to the Park. It was one of those delicious days which sometimes occur in October. Not a breath of air stirred beneath the fleecy gray

sky. The sycamore leaves hung by the last fibre, yet did not fall.

Soon I made up my mind. Six hundred a year was little enough to keep a wife on ; but it was impossible that my talents could long lie hidden at the I. F. department. Sir Frederick had said as much the other day. No one knew so much about the Credit Mobilier of Austria, and an envoy would soon be wanted to proceed to Francis Joseph's court. Kate was a fine-looking woman. Plenty of good hair, teeth unexceptionable ; we had certainly loved each other a good deal last summer. What would the poor girl do now she was alone in the world ? I had just time at my lodgings to throw my things into a port-manteau, seize my despatch-box, and reach King's Cross in time for the 4.30 down train. There was yet a moment to telegraph to my clerk—

'Important Cabinet meeting at Lord H—'s. Have to attend to settle the claims of Prussia. Invest the Pomeranian 160,000*l*. Decline Emperor's offer. Back on the 20th. Letters to be sent to Ashton Hall.'

With dusk the train stopped at Ashton Station. Oddly enough I found a trap from my uncle's waiting there ; but then somehow or other things always do arrange themselves for men born to command their fellows.

'Well, John,' I said, as we sped along the side of the park, 'how is the master?'

'Not anything to boast of, sir : he has a touch of his old enemy ; but he will be glad to see you.'

'Ah, I shall just save dinner. Birds plentiful this season?'

'Pretty fair, sir ; no one has shot them yet. The rector has been too ill to walk ; you know he died on Saturday?'

'Yes, I had heard ; but here we are ! Hold up, old horse ! Now, John, take the ribbons.'

I descended, and was shown into the library. My uncle nursed his gouty feet by the side of a huge wood-fire carefully arranged on dogs three centuries old. The great and wise of all times and countries were caged around the walls in row after row of books. His welcome, if somewhat testy, was cordial.

'Well, Alan, what brings you here ? Have cab-hire and white kid gloves ruined you?'

'Not exactly, or I should have stopped short at Colney Hatch. The fact is, my dear uncle, negotiations of a very important character have been set on foot with Prussia. I had to run down to Lord H—'s ; they can't settle these affairs, you know, without

some one from the I. F. department ; I took you *en route*, hoping with Milton that your experience

“ Might attain
To something of prophetic strain ”

on my behalf.’

‘ Hem ! ’ said the old man, mollified ; ‘ time was when the Premier constantly sent down a Queen’s Messenger to me on the eve of an important debate. I remember Castlereagh waking me at three in the morning and sitting on my bed while I thought over what was the best course to be taken with regard to the French intervention in Spain.’

‘ Political wisdom at present,’ I observed, ‘ too often consults the presiding genius of the *Morning Star*. We will discuss Prussia’s embarrassments over the Clos Vougeot. Shall I ring for your valet to take your arm while I help you in to dinner ? ’

The *purée* and turbot were so unexceptionable that I was not surprised at my uncle’s attack of gout. When the cloth was removed (dinners *à la Russe* found no favour at Ashton), the butler placed Mr. Norris’s toast-and-water before him.

‘ No, no, Morton ; Alan must be supported,’ said he, ‘ at the sherry. Get me some Clos Vougeot. Alan, you are quite right,’ he continued, ‘ no one ever took harm from Burgundy. Erasmus rejuvenated himself by drinking it. Old Drencham may say what he likes to-morrow ; *nunc est bibendum* ! ’

After a pause he went on : ‘ Poor Gibbons is dead, Alan ; I shall miss him very much. It is very sad about Kate ; she will have to go out as a governess. It seems her father invested largely in the Tidal Wave Force Company, and has lost his all. They smashed last week, and he had a fit when they told him.’

‘ I had hoped some good fellow ere this would have asked for her hand,’ I observed carelessly.

‘ Yes, she is pretty, certainly, and what is better, clever ; but you young men now-a-days rave about a *blonde chevelure*, and she has hair as black as night.’

‘ If I were a marrying man,’ I remarked, holding my glass up to the light, ‘ I think I should have hazarded a refusal. But then she is penniless, and love in a cottage would not suit me after diplomatic dinners ; nor could I earth up celery after having arbitrated the great Zollverein treaty.’

My uncle laid down his glass ere he had well tasted the glowing liquid, and tapped his snuff-box in great perturbation.

‘ To be sure, love-matches are all very well, Alan, for your

romantic men, college fellows and the like. No practical man could think of such a thing, were the lady Helen herself. Ashton Hall is a fine estate, is it not ?

‘Yes, you have greatly improved it. Netherby tells me the young timber is now saleable. Planting in the manner you did fifty years ago was most judicious.’

‘It ought to be made up with the Fluxton estate,’ he went on, not heeding my interruption. ‘People say Laura Fluxton is plain, as if an heiress were ever beautiful ! I should like to see the man who will have Ashton adding Fluxton to it.’

I was my uncle’s favourite nephew, so I winced internally at the suggestion.

‘You see, sir, a fellow likes to see a pretty girl at the end of his table. Why didn’t Dame Fortune give Kate Gibbons the manor as a dowry for her good looks ?’

‘The heir of Ashton ought to marry Laura Fluxton,’ said my uncle decisively, ‘were she Mucklemouthed Meg herself !’

‘Certainly, sir,’ I said with a perfectly unconscious look ; ‘and if she refuses him, I will get him an introduction to the Pig-faced Lady. She has no end of money, they say ; and after a year of her, a man might be farther encouraged to go in for the Dunmow fitch.’

‘Nay, Alan,’ observed he once more, with a smile, ‘so rash a man you may be sure would never get a *rasher*.’

But when he wished me good-night he once more returned to the point.

‘You stop here to-morrow ?’

‘Unless the country goes to the dogs during my absence.’

‘Ride over to see Laura to-morrow morning. O ! by the way, tell Netherby and Stanley I shall want them as witnesses to a document when you return. Good-night !’

After breakfast next day I asked Mr. Norris if he had any commands for Fluxton Hall ere I mounted my horse.

‘Hah, hah !’ he chuckled, ‘ask Fluxton about that poaching rascal Morris ; and hark ye ! sacrifice to the Graces, and vow a hecatomb to Persuasion. Venus and all her doves go with you !’

He stood watching me down the park : at the lodge I turned and rode swiftly towards the rectory.

Kate and I had exchanged divers love-passages in years past. She was now in trouble. Come what would, I would marry her. She must not go forth into a cold world to earn her bread as a governess.

The rectory stood apart from the rest of the village shaded

by old elms. They were now straining in the wind, and only here and there a yellow leaf clung to the naked boughs.

I put the horse into the well-known stable, crossed the lawn to the drawing-room bow-window, opened it, and entered.

‘Pardon me, Miss Gibbons, but I would not ring and disturb you to-day. I am not going to sympathise or condole with you as an ordinary friend might do. I have come down from London to see, as something dearer than a friend, in what I can help.’

‘O, Mr. Woodward! what can I say to you at such a time as this? Yours is true kindness,’ and she turned away much affected.

After a pause I resumed—‘You will have to see to your father’s will and to dilapidations on the house; but first, where are you going while all these duties—these sad duties to a mourner—are being gone through?’

‘You have heard from your uncle, of course, about my father’s speculations. They have proved most unfortunate—he lost all. The furniture will pay for our debts; but I grieve at not being able to meet the dilapidations, which will certainly be heavy on this old house. As for myself, I shall seek employment, and hope in time to liquidate everything.’ And Miss Gibbons proudly faced her lover.

‘Kate, I have three hundred pounds lying idle at my banker’s; borrow it—you can pay me interest if you will.’

‘How can I thank you for your generosity? but—ah no, no, I cannot take it, Mr. Woodward.’

‘Then take me with it, Kate, if that will reconcile you better to it,’ and I held her hand firmly, which struggled to be free. ‘You know how long I have loved—I came here on purpose to say this—Kate, my own Kate, look up!’

She paused a moment, and then she said: ‘It is almost too happy; but your uncle, he would never forgive me. O, Mr. Woodward—Alan—it cannot be!—do not ask me further;’ and she sat down pale as death on the sofa.

I begged and implored, but to no purpose—she would not even give me hope; nothing was so abhorrent to her feelings as to enter a family where she was not welcome. I blamed her pride; she acknowledged she deserved it. I railed at my uncle; she said,

‘Nay, nay, true friend, do not speak thus, with him above yet unburied. You shall hear betimes from me. If I am in difficulty, I promise to write to you, and trust you as my bro-

ther—do not grieve. Forgive me,' and she turned her earnest eyes on me.

I could only silently kiss her forehead and gaze a moment into her face. Then I retreated to my horse, and rode off silent and dispirited. I loved her truly; why should she thus throw so foolish an obstacle in the way? She loved me—had as good as confessed it: why are girls so fanciful?

Occupied by these sombre reflections, I was startled as I turned out of the lane into the main road by a groom galloping by. He pulled up on seeing me, and asked if I had seen his mistress.

'What? A lady pass here? No. Nothing amiss, eh?'

'She was riding Proud Peter, sir: he's a desperate horse in his tantrums, and has started off like mad with her, while I was getting a stone out of this un's foot,'—and chatting with the butcher, he might have added.

We galloped on together. After a turn or two the road opened upon a common, and there we saw the runaway scattering the sheep in every direction as he furiously bore off his helpless rider. I knew enough of the country to be aware that over the dip he was rapidly approaching were several chalk-quarries, and that instant action was necessary. My horse soon distanced the groom, and bore me rapidly across the arc of the fugitive's course, my aim being to cut off the terrified animal, and either seize the reins, or at all events head him from the quarries. Onwards I sped, with the riding habit of the slim figure before me fluttering behind her as my mark, and her hair (she had lost her hat) streaming in the brisk autumnal breeze. It was an exciting chase. I was rapidly nearing them, when her horse swerved to the right and made straight at a hedge—a regular bullfinch—my only comfort was there was no quarry on the opposite side. The lady still sat him bravely; a moment more, and they neared it. I had just time to shout, 'Lift him to it!' when there was a spring, a loud crash, and the animal burst through, leaving his rider insensible on the earth with an ugly cut on her head.

CHAPTER II.

'WELL,' said my uncle, with his hand on the bell when I entered the library that afternoon, 'am I to ring for Netherby and Stanley?'

‘If you think they can be of any service to you.’

‘Well but, Alan, have you left her an accepted suitor? Is it all right?’

‘No, sir; it is a very nasty cut indeed.’

‘Cut!’ roared my uncle, ‘cut! do you mean to say she wouldn’t have you? Tell me all about it. What hard hearts girls have now-a-days!’

‘I assure you, Wood says she will carry the mark of to-day’s work to her grave.’

‘You don’t mean to say you told that chatterbox Wood about your proposal? Why, Wood will tell it to all his patients!’

‘Proposal? I really don’t understand you.’

‘Come, come, Alan, finesse apart, of course it is all right, eh? Those fellows will come up directly, and we will execute the will forthwith.’

‘But, unfortunately, Miss Fluxton is still insensible. She was flung from her horse this afternoon, and her head is seriously injured.’

‘Whew!’ said my uncle solemnly, ‘is she very—?’

At this moment the door opened, and a footman ushered into the presence Netherby in a russet garb and an awestruck countenance, and Stanley pale with terror, and repeatedly stroking his hair to my uncle.

‘Hillo! What? I don’t want you!’ he shouted to the unlucky fellows—‘go and be hanged to you both for a couple of,’ &c. &c. Long before he could finish, the wretched rustics had fled to the servants’ hall, while I shouted with laughter.

The old man flung himself into his arm-chair, and moodily resumed: ‘You will have to wait and try again; meanwhile make yourself happy with the pheasants. The L. F. department will have to lose your valuable aid for the present.’

Unfortunately Briggs handed me a telegram from Lennox as I dismounted. The Kuttack Provinces want a loan at once. 900,000%; I must run back and see about it, I suppose—or else there will be some terrible blunder. There are not above two of the subs who know where the Kuttack Provinces are. I don’t want the department to be overhauled in the House; some fellow will be proposing to give us Cape sherry. So I must at once wish you good bye.’

As I spoke, the carriage passed the windows; and ere long I was once more whirled off to the great Babylon.

The Kuttack loan was duly negotiated; and a month more found us busy upon the Carribee Succession Duty. Lord

Mayor's-day, with the usual raid of Whitechapel upon decent hats, had just passed, when among my correspondence arrived two private letters.

One was directed in a hand that had been bold enough for a premier's; but now it shook sadly here and there, and the letters were occasionally blurred and smudged like the same worthy's fingers when knotted with gout. This could be from no one but my uncle.

'Dear Alan,' it began. 'I thought you would like some news from Ashton this dull weather. Miss Fluxton has quite recovered: young Quickspeke is to marry her in a month. I do not think you would have had any chance, unless she had been ignorant of your proposal to Miss Gibbons. Some men never know Comet port from Oxford mixture. My sister Jane's boy is fend of a country life. I trust the new ministry will not forget such devoted public servants as yourself. Netherby and Stanley have just come in to witness my signature, so I must end.—Ever your affectionate uncle,

'C. H. NORRIS.'

'Lambton' I cried to my head clerk.

That functionary appeared prompt as the genie when Aladdin rubbed his lamp. 'Oblige me by putting this letter in the hottest part of the fire,' I observed; and the note was consumed to ashes forthwith.

Now for the other. It was written on black-edged mourning paper from the 'severe affliction' department. The handwriting was firm yet delicate and ladylike.

Ship Euphrates, Gravesend,
Nov. 11, 186—.

'MY DEAR MR. WOODWARD.—After your kindness to me at Ashton, and my promise to let you know what my plans were, you will not be surprised to hear that I am going to India as governess to the Honourable Sir R. Prynne's daughters. We sail in an hour. You will soon learn to thank me for sparing us the bitterness of saying farewell to one another. You carry with you my loving affection and best wishes for your happiness: a kinder fate might have saved me from signing myself your most sincere and sisterly friend,

K. G.'

'Lambton, a hansom immediately.'

I reached Gravesend to hear that the Euphrates sailed during the night. She might touch at Plymouth, but it depended on the weather.

Of course the Carribee Succession Duty Papers could follow me to Plymouth; my name could be signed there as well as in London. I went down by the night mail, and next morning called upon the agent of the packet line to which the Euphrates belonged.

He informed me decisively but courteously that there was not the slightest chance of her touching at, or even sighting Plymouth. She had discharged her pilot at Folkestone, the telegraph had that morning brought word, and was rapidly making the best of her way down Channel with a favouring wind. Sometimes when passengers joined at Plymouth their vessels put in there, but the Euphrates had shipped her full complement before leaving Gravesend.

What was to be done now? It was certain I should not see Kate again. I was chagrined certainly, nay seriously grieved, I settled with myself while smoking my cigar on the Hoe. My affection for her was so deep that I could not all at once and philosophically consign her memory to that limbo of lost loves to be found at the bottom of most men's hearts. Yet it was absurd for a man of the world like myself, who hobnobbed familiarly with ministers, and had the *entrée* of every house worth knowing in Mayfair—it did seem absurd for me to be so hard hit at losing a simple clergyman's daughter. I could not return to town at once. It was to be hoped the Carribean millionaires could wait a little longer for their documents. I am not sentimental; but it would be pleasant, I fancied, for a time to live 'the world forgetting, by the world forgot.' And so I determined to pay a visit, now it was so near, to the Lizard.

After a drive of about a dozen miles from Helston, the little omnibus deposited me, with two more passengers, inmates of the little village, in an open courtyard at the back of the only inn in the locality. It was dusk, and beyond two or three squalid cottages and a cheery radiance of the kitchen-window before me, I could see nothing save moon and mist. There was not a tree, not a bush, not a twig, nor had we passed any for the last two miles. Heather swept by the keen breeze, and a vast cloud-curtain overhanging the cliffs facing the sea, closed in the prospect. I shivered, and went in to find sour cider the only beverage attainable, unless I tried the landlord's wine and spirit store.

‘Ye see, sir, us don’t often get gentlemen here but in summer, and there isn’t much drinking among the men. The teetotal sect is a main trouble to tavern-keepers;’ and so saying the host consoled himself with a pull at cider ‘sharp’ enough to cut his throat.

I slept well, for I had the inn to myself; and next day descended to the shore. There was a magnificent sea rolling into the little bay under a brisk south-wester, turgid and swollen on the horizon, and breaking here and there into angry foam, which was overwhelmed forthwith by the succeeding surge—as a luckless trooper who falls in a cavalry charge is trampled under foot by his comrades. The coast was composed of serpentine rocks, cruel and sharp, like wolf’s teeth, where they receded from the shore, but split into a hundred jagged reef-like masses where the sea roared and leapt and chafed in sheets of surf before me. A lurid glare overhead, athwart which dirty yellowish cloud-drifts were hurried with their ragged edges catching the gleam for a moment and then swept into the mist, boded but ill, I thought, for mariners who should near these iron-bound coasts. It was a splendid spectacle; and as the day wore on I watched with the old lighthouse-keeper the waves increase and every sail seek the offing. At nightfall a tremendous gale was raging, the wind howled, and a legion of demons seemed disputing the cliffs with the waves. Rain lashed down in torrents, and surf was sent flying in sheets over the moor. The old salt shrugged his shoulders, wished me good-night, and went in.

About midnight I was roused by the shouts of men running under my windows. I could hear their anxious voices over the roar of the storm. The landlord came to the door, knocked hurriedly, and said,

‘There’s a large ship on the rocks off the Old Head, sir; would you like to see the lifeboat go out?’

I did not wait for a second invitation, but soon joined him, clad in a boating-coat and a sou’-wester tied well on my head.

We were almost carried off our feet as we came out upon the cliffs by the Head. It was an awful sight. By a straggling moon we could discern mountains of surf hurled over the rocks beneath us and gleaming like sheets of flying silver. Out to sea was a writhing, howling wilderness, each surge striving to out-top its neighbour. Half a mile out, lit by a couple of blue lights, lay the hull of a large vessel, broadside on the waves. You could hear them boom and hiss and shriek as they flew over and over-

whelmed her in foam. Every now and then a gun was fired, and the sea, cumbered with topmasts and wreckage, was vividly lighted up for a moment to pass into thicker darkness than ever as the report reached our ears.

We ran down the zigzag path to the cove. Her crew were already hauling down the lifeboat. They wanted one to fill up her quota. It was not hatred of life now I had lost my love that impelled me to offer my services; it was that stirring desire which comes over a man in serious issues to lend his arm and take his life in his hand if he can only save others. One who has pulled in an Oxford eight-oar is sure to get at home even with the ponderous oar of a lifeboat. The crew hesitated, and some preferred waiting for Simmons; but he had some distance to come, and no one could say for certain that he knew anything about the wreck. Meanwhile the storm blew in furious gusts, no more guns were fired from the stranded ship, the waves were evidently driving the men from below. There was no time to be lost.

‘Will you obey orders?’ said the coxswain.

‘I’ll do my very best, and drown with you, my lads, if we fail.’

‘Hurrah!’ they cried; ‘put on the jacket and take your place.’

‘Now then, easy, lads, shove her off,’ shouted the cox; ‘now’s your time!’

The willing arms of the crowd pushed us down the slips and ran us out well into the surf, some getting knocked down, and all thoroughly drenched in the operation.

‘Bend to it, lads! stick to your oars, and we’ll soon reach her.’ These were the last commands I heard. A huge roller sprang over us ere we could clear the surf, filled the boat with water, and half stunned me.

‘Hold hard, mate,’ said the man who shared my bench, ‘we sha’n’t ship any more.’

We did not for some time get a further wetting; the difficulty was to keep one’s seat, as the boat rode madly up some mountainous wave to shoot headlong into its trough, and then to be knocked about in the broken water before the next swell came and the previous movements were repeated. It was desperate work, too, laying hold of the waves with the oar, such was the swiftness with which they flew by, and the force with which they beat upon its blade. I was exhausted before we had made half the distance, while my companion chewed his quid and pulled away with supreme indifference.

‘What ship is she?’ I said to him.

‘I thought a collier at first,’ he returned; ‘but Bill tells me it’s the “You-fear-at-ease.” Us can’t abide them furrin names. She’s an Indiaman.’

The Euphrates, I thought, and Kate in danger! with clenched teeth I felt no more fatigue, but pulled mechanically, amazing my neighbour by my efforts.

‘Look out!’ roared the skipper; ‘grip for your lives!’ and with the words a thundering swell caught us obliquely on the starboard, snapped two of the oars, and overturned the boat in an avalanche of foam. In a few seconds, which seemed ages to a submerged man, gripping the safety-lines for dear life’s sake, she righted herself. I picked myself up from the confusion of ropes and stores in which I lay, seized my oar, hanging by its lanyard, took a long breath, and once more we made way, the water running out of the false bottom of the boat as we picked up two of our mates floating along upborne by their cork jackets.

Soon we gained the Euphrates, and ran as far as we dared venture into the caldron of surf around her; a few sailors appeared on the deck, and several women were wailing on the poop, as every minute the huge seas leapt over them, carrying away one occasionally in their grasp. We could not help those ill-fated souls, as we were lying on and off, while our cox flung the sailors a rope. All the boats, bulwarks, and deck-lumber had long been swept off, and evidently most of her crew were lost already. While we were drawing up, the end was at hand. Three immense rollers in close succession, riding high and hissing as they came on, discharged themselves viciously on the Euphrates. There was a roar, a loud cracking, and amidst the shrieks of the women the noble ship heeled over and went all at once to pieces. We drew out as quickly as we could from the confused surges and dangerous proximity of the wreckage. It is a marvel to me, looking back on that frightful night, how we survived, considering what cross waves boarded us at this time, dashing spars and hencoops over us, and tossing the heavy life-boat like an egg-shell where they would. Each of us did his best to save the poor creatures who were borne by us. Eight men and three children were picked up. Then we steered right into the heart of the wreckage, and got in two ladies, but alas! neither was Kate. The moon now shone brightly over the awful waste of waters: no more bodies were to be seen, and the coxswain gave the word ‘Home.’ Still I peered over every wave

and scanned every trough in hopes of seeing—ha ! what is that ? Kate's pale, upturned face drifting by ! In an instant I dropped my oar, leaped in the seething chasm, with two strokes was upon her, and grasped her hair ! We were borne on, a surge flew over us ; I was stunned, smothered, became insensible, but still I clung to my prize, and my cork jacket held us both up.

When the sun was high in the heavens next day, bringing out the sea-gulls in strong relief against the still sullen waves that chafed round the Lizard Head, I awoke to find myself famous. Kate was safe, and in a fair way to recover speedily from her fright and immersion. The crew had picked us up after a severe struggle with the currents that set in so strongly off the Head. Our love-story had oozed out by some means or other, I learned ; and Kate and myself were receiving no small amount of popular sympathy. It was strange to find Rumour with her thousand tongues busy in this remote corner of the land.

Then came reporters by the dozen, like birds of prey which instinctively fly to their proper food. I became a hero now, if I had been only a successful financier before. He was a made man among them who could only catch sight of my umbrella. I was daily drawn out into numberless paragraphs, headed, 'A deed of daring ;' 'Noble action ;' 'Gallant exploit,' &c. ; as a small lump of gold is beaten into fibres broad enough to cover a country. Then, when Kate and I were married, as privately as we could, at Llandewednack Church (the most southerly church in England and the parish church of the Lizard), the enthusiasm of the papers knew no bounds. The 'romantic incident,' which at last gave me the 'love of my lifetime,' was blazoned far and wide ; and many a leading article in that dull time of the year revelled in gushing superlatives and lost itself in praises of marriage, 'the perennial paradise of humanity,' to do us honour.

Four gratifying results followed this event :

1. I was presented with the gold medal of the Royal Humane Society, and their thanks inscribed on vellum. Other men, I believe, get silver medals and thanks written on parchment.

2. Lord Hanaper suddenly remembered that the Inspectorship of Sealing-wax and Wafers was vacant—'and by Jove, sir, that industrious and gallant Woodward shall have it !' It is worth 3,000*l.* per annum, and a sinecure.

3. I received another letter from Mr. Norris, saying he had revoked his will, and was making a new one in my favour.

‘Excuse haste, Alan ; Netherby and Stanley have just come up to witness signature.’

4, and lastly : If anything were wanting to the perfect happiness which should always wait upon true love and successful heroism, this morning has supplied it. I have just become the happy father of twins. They are to be named Hero and Leander, and are at the present moment going on swimmingly.

WHERE SHALL WE GO?

A REPORT TO THE EDITOR OF A POPULAR MAGAZINE.

CHAPTER I. Involving Questions of Companionship—Economy, domestic and foreign—Morals for Travellers—Deductions from the Experimental Process—Meteorological Observations made on the Coast—Hartridge—The Grand Hotel—The Ferry—View of Worlton—The Signals—The Road to Flickstow—Peculiarities of Signboards—Arrival at the Bath Hotel, Flickstow.

YOUR Commissioner, deputed by the government of —— to examine into and to report upon this important question, flatters himself that he *has* done it this time, rather. The plan that your Commissioner (originally ‘we,’ that is myself, henceforth ‘I’) first of all determined upon, was the excellent one of examining witnesses, who, by personal explanation and reference to their diaries, enabled your humble servant to give the public a connected, and, let him hope, an interesting account of his carefully-managed investigation.

The result of this protracted inquiry was to raise envious thoughts in the generally placid breast of your overworked official. He heard of the fresh air, but he breathed it not. There were whispers of invigorating iodine, but far from him was the sniffing thereof. He yearned for the much-sounding sea; but if anybody mentioned Brighton, Margate, Scarborough, or Ramsgate to him, he shook his weary head, saying, ‘These places cannot give me what I so much need—the luxury of quiet.’

At length, the witnesses either came to an end suddenly, or, excusing themselves from attendance by reason of the fine weather, the heat in London, or the fact that their holiday-time had arrived, flatly refused to appear. What was to be done?

Yes, what was to be done? Should the public suffer loss? Perish the thought! Are there not many thirsty souls yet in

the metropolis gasping for iodine and the sad sea-wave? To these my words may perchance come as those of the oracle, and my pen be to them as the sign-post of destiny, directing them to what part of the coast they shall betake themselves.

I have said, by way of quotation, the *sad* sea-wave; and if you'll allow the printer to put that epithet into italics, I shall be much obliged to you; for I mean it, every bit of it. 'By the *sad* sea-waves I' did something or other, says the song. Not by the wild waves that were in the habit of talking sentiment to little Paul Dombey; no, nor by the 'sunlit dancing waves' of the happy poet; but by the sad, the soul-subduing waves, I and my public wish to sit; and those whom it may concern I will now inform how I sought out the saddest sea-wave that could be found anywhere; and I will put them also in the way of going and doing likewise, if they choose.

It has often occurred to me that the question of, *Where* shall we go? is intimately mixed up with that other one, *With whom* shall we go?

To a married man the answer is simple, if dictated by his wife. She will say (and who shall contradict a lady?), 'What better companion can you find than I am? What relaxation more perfect than digging sandpits for your children with their wooden spades on the beach, or playing at being buried alive under pebbles?'

The husband will, if he be peaceably inclined, give a wary answer. His views will coincide with those of his partner. But supposing him wary, and longing for an entire change, he will pooh-poo the hackneyed watering-places; he will imagine a fever at Worthing, sigh over the great expense of Brighton, deplore the distance of Scarborough, ridicule the notion of any lady of his wife's quality sojourning at Margate or Ramsgate; and finally offer to make a martyr of himself for the benefit of his family, by going away alone, as, he will pleasantly (if he be wise) style it, an *avant-courrier*, to test some hitherto unattempted shore, 'just to see if it will do; and if it will, he'll take a place, and they can all come down and join him.'

Ladies, a most admirable plan, I do assure you. (Gentlemen, I am not going to betray your confidence.)

To this proposal Madame, not without some slight misgivings, agrees; and Monsieur 'regrets that he must go alone on his mission,' 'wishes she could go with him,' and says to himself, says he (No, gentlemen, as I'm a man, I protest I will not betray you).

Having thus reduced two to a unit without a division, we find that the quotient gives us a bachelor *pro tem.*, and he is brought by this process under that common denomination to which the second question, 'With whom shall we go?' is more especially applicable.

I was bemoaning my fate, which (unlike Desdemona's) would not give me, this year, to the moor (I allude to where the grouse are wont to disport themselves), in the presence of an entertaining young friend of mine, who does me the honour of dining with me at my club occasionally, when he, so to speak, 'up and said,' 'Why don't you go to Flickstow?'

'Flickstow?' said I, 'where's Flickstow?' not having heard of it before.

'In Suffolk,' he replied. 'The quietest place in the world.'

'I'll go,' I said decisively. 'Will you come too?'

Come, of course he would. Not next week, however; he couldn't manage that, as he had to be at his father's next week. Well, the week after? Ah! the week after, let's see—no, he couldn't the week after, because he was coming back from his father's, and it wouldn't do, you know, to—you see—in fact—in short—

'Well, then,' I cut in, seeing he was becoming hazy, 'the week after that? You can say that for certain.'

It turned out, however, that he couldn't say that or anything else for certain; he would 'let me know—he would see when he could manage it,' and so on.

I hate being put off. If he didn't want to go, why didn't he say so? I looked sternly at him, and asked,

'What are you going to do to-morrow?'

He was going to the theatre to-morrow, to see what's his name in the new piece.

'The day after?'

I had meshed him at last. He hesitated, but feeling that my eye was upon him, had not the face to keep on being engaged for ever.

'Will you go the day after to-morrow?'

I asked him this as if it was 'money or your life.' He looked up half-laughing: my mouth didn't move a muscle. He tried to turn the conversation by imitating Compton or Buckstone, I am not clear which it was, in consequence of his forgetting to name the specimen beforehand. He generally makes me laugh by this move. His drollery failed to raise a smile except on a young waiter's face, who had probably heard one of these come-

dians the night before. I said severely, 'Take away;' whereupon the attendant went off with the cheese, and I fancy I heard him afterwards retailing Buckstone to another waiter behind the screen. Be that as it may, *I* was not going to laugh, and I didn't.

'Will you go down with me to Flickstow the day after to-morrow?' I asked.

'I will,' said he, with the decision of a godfather at a christening.

'You won't disappoint me?' I asked, knowing my man.

'Disappoint you! Far be it from me to disappoint you!' he returned; as Compton this time.

'Then that's settled,' I said, relaxing into a smile.

'Precisely.' Buckstone.

We sent for a 'Bradshaw,' an 'A B C,' and a waiter. Hooper, my friend, took the 'A B C,' I opened 'Bradshaw,' and we both referred to the waiter.

'Can't make much out of this,' observed Hooper, in the character of Buckstone; whereat the waiter didn't even laugh, thinking it to be his natural voice.

The waiter knew all about it—waiters always do. The waiter was wrong, however, but soon got on the right scent; and having found a train at Bishopsgate, ran it to earth, or rather to sea, at no great distance from Flickstow.

We fixed on a mid-day train, in order, as we said, to split the difference; and to prevent disappointment, I engaged to call for Hooper.

The next day I spent in making preparations for my journey; and with a view to guarding against any chance of *ennui* at Flickstow, I selected two or three books of such a portable size as could be carried in my satchel-bag, which, being slung round my back by a shoulder-strap, is always handy. In this I placed my note-book, my pencils, my pens, my portable inkstand, paper, blotting-paper, penknife, my pipes and tobacco (solace of my weary hours!), and—that's all.

High were our hopes on the morning of our settled departure from town.

Everything was packed, including my sponge and scissors; and I had sat upon the top, making myself as heavy as possible, while the maid coaxed the fastenings together, and was now only debating as to whether I should take my hat-box or not, when the second post brought a letter.

For me: from Hooper.

I tore it open.

‘DEAR OLD BOY’ (under the circumstances this style of address is very trying), ‘I’m so sorry, but what am I to do? Our butler got locked up in the police-station last night, and I must go and see after the fellow. My mother comes home, and will be alarmed. Must stop to see her. I am so vexed. Better luck next time. Adieu, yours grieved,

‘T. HOOPER.

‘P.S. Next week I go away. See you when I return.’

My very natural exclamation after reading this will not bear repetition.

‘You may unpack that portmanteau,’ I said gloomily to Mary. ‘I sha’n’t go to-day.’

The idea was not abandoned entirely for this day, however, on account of my disappointment.

I tried to run through a list of friends generally available as companions at short notice.

A cab brought me to the first of them; he had lodgings in the neighbourhood of St. James’s-street.

‘At home?’ I inquired.

‘No, sir; Mr. Hodgson went out of town this morning early.’

‘Do you know where he is?’ was my next question; as, if he had gone on a solitary tour, I would catch him up.

‘Yes, sir; Mr. Hodgson’s at his grandfather’s, in Wales.’

‘O, thank you.’

His grandfather’s in Wales!—why hadn’t I a grandfather in Wales? It suddenly flashed across my mind that I had an uncle in Cumberland; but I didn’t know the address; and if I did, as he had never asked me to come, perhaps he wouldn’t be best pleased to see me without an invitation.

My next friend near Portland-place was at home, and at a late breakfast, in a dressing-gown.

‘Would I have anything?’ I would; just a little bit to keep him company. You see I wanted to show myself peculiarly jovial and sociable, in order to be successful in my canvass. With my first mouthful I told him my plan. I informed him (with a slight suppression of facts, and a little colouring for his particular benefit), that it had suddenly struck me, being tired of town, that a quiet watering-place would be most enjoyable for a few days, and that I had immediately fixed upon him as the fellow of all others who would delight in a trip of this sort. I didn’t mention my previous failures, and said nothing about Hooper.

Willard (my friend at breakfast in his dressing-gown) jumped at the idea, and closed with it on the spot.

Willard is a capital fellow; so impulsive and enthusiastic: no humbug about Willard. 'Here's a bit of luck, after all,' thought I to myself.

I suggested that he'd better pack up at once and dress, as he couldn't travel in his dressing-gown.

Willard jumped up. He's such an impulsive fellow, is Willard.

'By Jove!' cries Willard, slapping the pocket of his dressing-gown.

'What is it?' I ask, with a slight misgiving.

'I've got no money,' returns Willard; 'I can't go without money.'

My nature is not a peculiarly generous one as regards lending money; but on this occasion the man was worth it, and I offered to advance him such a sum as would enable him to accompany me, and then, when we were settled at our seaside quarters, he could get his remittances, and reimburse his disinterested benefactor.

He thanked me: it was very kind, he said, very kind; but the fact was, he couldn't well leave town for a day or two, now he came to think of it. On the whole, jolly as it would be, he'd better not go.

To this I said 'Pooh!' and was very nearly getting angry with him.

There was a silence for a minute or two, which I broke by expostulating with him on his conduct.

But he had made up his mind. Willard is as obstinate as a pig, when he has made up, what he calls, his mind.

In no very good humour I quitted Willard. It was now nearly four o'clock; and after five there was no train to Flickestow, even if there *was* one at five.

The question, 'With whom shall we go?' is not so easily answered, you see, as 'Where shall we go?'

I would put it off till to-morrow, I determined, and see if any one turned up in the course of the evening. By a sudden inspiration, I wrote to Fuzzer, in a Government office.

Fuzzer sent word that he'd join me, if he was back in time from Twickenham, whither he was on the point of starting for a dinner-party. Anyhow, he'd follow me if I went on by myself, and would write from my seaside quarters. He wanted change, he said; and finished up his letter by a quotation from

some song or other, about the pleasant breezes or the stormy winds.

This was to the purpose, at all events. Should I wait for him? On thinking the matter over, I came to the conclusion that I had better not stop in town any longer, but depart by the first train in the morning. Hope disappointed had made me heartily sick of London; and I felt so disturbed and restless, that I scarcely got any sleep all that night; and in consequence I dropped off into the soundest slumber when I ought to have been getting up, thereby missing the first train in the morning, and rising with a slight headache, which was a pleasant state of things for a commencement.

There was an 11.42 train, however, that just suited me.

The readers I am addressing are those who, fatigued by the season, anxious to get away, tired of hackneyed routes, of everlasting marine parades, of populous, popular, and much-frequented places on the English or any other coast, are in search of some quiet, healthy, cheerful, out-of-the-way spot, where the snobbish cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest.

Such a one was L. Such a one am I still.

Tenez! I will tell you all about Flickstow. Fairly and without prejudice, I will bear witness in that supreme court wherein you my gentle readers sit as jury to draw your own conclusions from what you shall hear, and a true verdict find, for or against the place, according to the evidence I shall give.

‘That’s the place for us;’ or ‘That’s not the place for us’—*placet* or *non placet*, as the Academical senates have it—will be the form of your honest decision.

By permission of the court I will, from time to time, refresh my memory from my notes and diary.

‘Now, sir,’ says the counsel engaged for the public interest, after satisfying himself as to my personal identity, ‘on what day did you go down to Flickstow?’

I gave him the date, having no reason for concealment. Candidly, then, it was the 5th of July.

‘The 5th of July,’ says counsel, turning slightly towards my Lord and the Gentlemen of the Jury. ‘Now, sir, will you have the kindness to tell us what you did on that day?’

‘What I did?’ I inquire, a little puzzled.

‘Yes, sir,’ repeats counsel blandly, ‘what you did.’

The learned Judge explains, ‘What course did you pursue in order to reach Flickstow?’

Ascertaining that I have permission to tell my story in my

own way, after the manner of a Parliamentary witness before a Committee of the House, I commence :

'From my note-book of that date. Something written about "packing books and pipes." O, I recollect. Having heard of the supernatural quiet of Flickstow, I ordered my servant to put up certain entertaining books, viz. Tennyson's *Princess*, the Emperor's *Julius Cæsar*' (capital opportunity for reading *Julius Cæsar*!); 'a volume of De Quincey; an elementary metaphysical work' (splendid opportunity for studying metaphysics!); '*Roderick Random*' (never having read it through, now was my time); '*The Student's Hunc*, and a compressed *History of France*' (so as not to waste a moment). 'My bag, as I have already informed you, was well and carefully filled. Thus was I furnished for my flight.'

Counsel. 'What did you then?

Commissioner (still witnessing). 'I sent for a hansom cab, and seeing my portmanteau placed on the roof, and having deposited my bag at my feet, was driven off for Bishopsgate Station.

'Being short of time, there were plenty of stoppages, and the horse behaved in the most aggravating manner. At the station-gate there was a block, and in three minutes the train would start.

'Out I jumped, seized my portmanteau, which the man' (after receiving sixpence over his fare, because he couldn't give me change—pooh!) 'handed down to me, and was up at the clerk's office with a celerity that would have, at any other time, been incredible to myself.'

'Flickstow,' said I to the clerk.

'Harridge, for Flickstow,' replies the clerk. I informed the porter that I'd take my portmanteau inside with me.

Having given him a threepenny-bit for no other reason than that he *was* the porter (for he hadn't helped me in the least, in fact rather the contrary, having caused bother and delay by attempting to wrest my baggage from me and put it in the van), I jumped into the carriage, showed my ticket to the guard, and sank down on a soft seat, with my back to the engine, in high spirits at saving my train, and getting away from smoky choking London.

I find in my notes the words, 'Guard whistling, stoker whistling, more whistling, as if to encourage the engine. The engine won't be encouraged. "All right!" The engine don't care. Right or wrong, she won't move. The stoker uses violence, I suppose; for with a wild shriek of agony that goes to the heart,

she jerks herself painfully out of the station. Probably she has become stiff with standing still so long; anyhow, with a few more snorts she gives up her obstinacy, and will show them what she can do.'

Judging from this note, I should say I was in a very good humour. The next pencil-marks are zigzaggy, as if the writer's hand had staggered about over the paper: a sort of tipsy scribble. Deciphered, it appears to be, 'Confound it! hang it! my bagpipes.'

'Bagpipes' puzzles me for a moment. I can't play them, I am glad to say. I certainly never travelled with them. Very odd. O no, 'bag,' 'pipes,' two words. I'll explain. At what exact moment I became aware that I had sustained a severe loss, I do not recollect. I know that, contrary to all the bye-laws thereto made and provided, I was going to smoke a pipe, when the horrid thought flashed across me that I had lost my bag. For some time I fought against the conviction. Alas! it was gone. I searched above, and I searched below, like the servants for the unfortunate young lady who paid so sad a forfeit for running away from a mistletoe-bough; but not a vestige of a bag could I find.

At this point I was overwhelmed by the utter helplessness of my situation.

I would ask the guard at the next station as to what should be done.

We arrived at the next station. I began, from the carriage-window, detailing my accumulated losses to the guard, who was a stern man with a sandy beard, and an impatient manner that was not natural to him. I could see that it had grown upon him from never stopping anywhere more than five minutes, and being off directly somewhere else.

He came to the point at once—'Where had I left it?'

I was about to explain that this was precisely what I didn't know, but it was either—

'Ah!' says he, holding up his hand with such suddenness that I drew in my head involuntarily, thinking he was going to hit me for delaying him—'all right!' He then looked down the train, and waved his hand again; then blew a little plated whistle that hung by a little plated chain from his button-hole, and then, as we began to move, he shook his head at me and said, 'I'm afraid you won't get it, sir,' with which he disappeared, into the air apparently, but really (as I believe) up the side, and on to his perch on the roof of the next carriage.

At the next station I stop him (much against his will) to inform him that I am sure I left it in the cab.

‘The policeman at the gate takes the numbers of all the cabs that come up for each train.’ After this information he wants to run away, but I won’t let him.

‘But,’ I am obliged to tell him, ‘my cab didn’t come inside the station.’

He is evidently annoyed at what he considers my waste of time, and shaking his head sharply, breaks away from me, throws up his hand, whistles briskly, disappears, and gets out of my way for the rest of the journey.

What with the shock of this bag affair, the hurry to catch the train, and the sleeplessness of the previous night, I was fairly overcome, and while endeavouring to adapt the noise of the wheels to an air from *Somnambulo*, I dropped off into the soundest sleep that I had enjoyed for some time.

Often have I travelled by night from Edinburgh to London, from Boulogne to Paris, from London to the Lakes, but never yet have I succeeded in getting what is called a comfortable nap. That most disagreeable person who puts on a Scotch cap, who wraps a railway rug round his legs, and knows all about placing cushions in imitation of a bed, is a man to be envied. He may snore horribly and disgust his fellow-travellers, but he is to be envied. He boasts that he can go to sleep anywhere, like Napoleon, and get up at any time, like Wellington. Often have I watched him during those dreary lamp-lit hours, and vainly tried to imitate his proceedings. The attitude which he found most conducive to sleep made me more wakeful even than sitting upright. I have attempted to play at it by shutting my eyes firmly, in order to delude myself into the idea that I am asleep, but have only woke up again more wide awake than ever. Therefore for me to fall asleep in a train is an exceptional and remarkable event.

When I awoke, I found that it was within fifteen minutes of the time of arrival at Harridge. While congratulating myself on not having overslept myself and passed by the station, our pace gradually slackened.

‘Kellshun!’ shouted one voice, making much of the last syllable.

‘Kappelpjunsh!’ shouted another, making, for variety, a good deal of the first.

‘Klshute!’ bellowed a third, dwelling on no syllables at all, and swallowing the last.

The station-master, an obliging gentleman, with papers in his hand, condescended to give me the correct name: it was Kapel Junction, and you changed here for Melbury, Dornton, and Chilcot.

Thanking him for the information, which would be most valuable at any time that I might be inclined to change at Melbury, Dornton, or Chilcot, it occurred to me to ask how long it would be before we reached Harridge?

‘Harridge?’ says he, as if he’d not heard of the place before.

‘Yes, Harridge for Flickstow,’ I explain.

‘O!’ he returns, ‘you ought to have got out at Lindentree for Harridge.’

‘Lindentree!’ I gasped.

‘Two stations before this.’

My hope is now solely in the station-master. ‘What shall I do? please, sir, what *shall* I do?’

The station-master is a practical man, gifted with admirable presence of mind. The consequence is that the station-master says simply,

‘Get out.’ And I got out accordingly.

‘All right!’ cries the guard, avoiding me instinctively. Whistle! Shriek! Off!

‘It’s very lucky,’ I said, conversationally, to the station-master, who seemed to have forgotten my existence, ‘that I asked you.’

‘Very,’ says he, not looking at me. ‘Here, go and take this parcel,’ &c.; and he leaves me to give orders to his merry men.

When’s the next train back to Lindentree?—there’s no train-list that I see. Where’s my Bradshaw? In my bag. O dear! Fortunate. I’ve still got my portmanteau—eh? This is too much!

I call myself fool and idiot. Having finished, I abuse the guard, who must have seen it, and the porter in London, for having stowed it away under the seat.

‘Where is the station-master?’

I must tell him all my woes. I began with the last—the crowning misery: ‘I have lost my portmanteau—it has gone on by the train!’ I tell him what was in it. He (being a practical man) would rather hear what was outside it.

‘Your name?’

‘It was—it was,’ I say gratefully, seeing a ray of hope. The moment after it strikes me that my last address written on it was ‘Gwll, Wales,’ where I had passed a few weeks last summer.

'You should have had it labelled,' says the station-master, in a tone of gentle rebuke.

'I should—I know I should,' I confess plaintively. I then told him all about my bag, and my going to sleep, and how (this in extenuation) no one had ever warned me of the change to be made at Lindentree.

'Gentlemen should always ask; it's the safest way.' He is more in sorrow than in anger, like the Ghost of Hamlet's father.

He considers for a moment. The fate of my portmanteau hangs on his lips.

'Telegraph,' says he, 'to the terminus. It'll get there before the train, and the guard will bring it back.'

I marvelled at his wisdom, and acted upon his advice. O, the anxious two hours I spent before the arrival of that up-train. At last, it came, and with it my portmanteau. In it (the train I mean) I went up to Lindentree; whence, having changed carriages, I proceeded to Harridge; and, nearly three hours after my proper time, at Harridge I arrived.

In my 'Notes' I find this moral deduced from experience: 'Always ask if you change anywhere for anywhere else; never worry a guard, lest he desert you in the hour of need; never yield yourself up to sleep, until you are certain that the guard will wake you at your destination. For this there is a gratuity expected, at your own discretion; and well worth the money.'

It is not my purpose to say anything about Harridge; no one would go down there by way of seaside enjoyment. As a matter of fact no one *does* go there to stop for amusement, only on business. Pleasure-seekers come from different places to Harridge, by rail or boat, by land, sea, or river, and having looked at it, depart again in different directions.

At Harridge the objects of interest are, the omnibus which takes you to the pier, the pier itself, the ferryman with 'Flick-stow,' in gold letters on his tarpaulin hat, and the Grand Hotel. The Grand Hotel makes up eighty beds daily, that is, it would make up that number and more, for aught I know, if eighty people would sleep there all at once. Not but that the Grand Hotel is equal to any other Grand Hotel with its regiment of waiters, bootses, chambermaids, porters, lifts, housemaids, cooks, and so forth. But that's not it. The public that visits Harridge comes in at one end by train, and goes out at the other by boat, every hour; or else, it arrives in a steamer from somewhere, and departs in another steamer for somewhere else; so that Harridge does not receive abiding families or sojourners for a week at a

time, and therefore for the present the Grand Hotel has not many opportunities for displaying its grandeur. If you are fond of shipping and mariners, you have plenty of both from the windows of the Grand Hotel. If you are fond of mariners' language, of the choicest and most elegant description, you can have that also, and no extra charge, from the windows of the Grand Hotel.

What the hundred and sixty chambermaids do (I put it at this number, as I never recollect having seen more or less than two chambermaids engaged in making up one bed) all day is a puzzle to me.

Perhaps they rehearse making up beds; and the waiters, no doubt, ring the bells, and answer them themselves; and to keep up the illusion, they probably give imaginary dinners to one another, and find fault with the cook. I wish the Hotel every success, as being decidedly one of the most comfortable that I've ever dined at, slept at, or stayed at for twenty-two hours. The Flickstow ferryman will pay your halfpenny toll for the pier (observe that the ticket is *not* transferable), and take you down the steps into the boat, which you will find manned by another stalwart ferryman, wearing a similar hat. The owner of the ferry will accompany you, and steer you safely across the wide river mouth, on the other side of which is Worlton, where you will disembark for your destination.

'Is that Flickstow?' is the traveller's first question to the intelligent ferryman.

No, that's Worlton. O, that's Worlton, is it! then Flickstow's beyond? Yes, Flickstow's beyond, out of sight. Is Flickstow a large place? you ask. Well, not so large as Worlton. O, indeed; but as there only seems to be one house at Worlton—

The ferryman explains that that is *his* house. Does the gentleman, asks the man at the stroke oar, intend to walk up to Flickstow? No, he doesn't, if he can be driven? If! can't he, that's all. The steerer will soon show him that, and forthwith hoists a flag bearing the device of three stars and a crescent. The Worlton standard? you inquire. No, that's an old pocket-handkerchief, as his mate (the bow oar, who grins and nods at this allusion) picked up at a shop ashore. 'You see we don't want to be like other folks,' explains Bow, grinning from ear to ear; whereat Stroke, Steerer, and Bow all laugh heartily, and you will join them out of politeness.

'They sees this ashore,' Steerer says, 'and David, he's my son, comes down to the boat directly.'

Steerer is eminently tickled with this piece of ingenuity.

'There's a telegraph for you,' says Bow, who's evidently the wag of the boat, and they all laugh again. I came to the conclusion, on a subsequent visit to the ferry, that these were old jokes, repeated to every passenger, and laughed at, as fresh, by the same crew.

'David sees it all this way off,' says Steerer, shaking the flag, 'David does.' But it appears on this occasion, at all events, that David doesn't, which disconcerts Steerer amazingly.

'What's come to the boy?' Steerer grumbles, and shakes the flag-post violently. This has no effect whatever on David, of whom there is no sign whatever. At last a dark speck on a white line makes its appearance.

'That's David,' says his father, with great satisfaction. David doesn't hurry himself in the least.

'What's he thinking of?' says his father, seeing that the pony (a white one) doesn't go out of a walk. 'Hi! come on!'





'Hi!' shouts the Stroke, turning in his seat.

'Hi!' shouts the Bow, outdoing the Stroke by a tone and a half.

'Hi!' shout the three in chorus.

'Hi!' comes back from shore a weak voice, like that of the man in a box, or up the chimney, so popular with ventriloquists. The pony trots, and the boat is rowed on; we stick in the sand, so does the pony; we can't move out of it; the pony lifts his legs daintily, and is up alongside of us in a couple of minutes.

Through shady lanes, reminding one of those of Devonshire in miniature, we, that is, I and David, drove: David driving, of course. David's knack of turning corners, and his steeple-chase way of taking the deep ruts, was a thing to be shuddered at. I didn't hint at my feelings to David, who was a lanky young fellow of about seventeen with a difficulty as to the stowage of his legs, because I felt that David probably knew all about it, and was confident in himself, his springs and his pony. I wasn't.

A turning, and a bump that nearly sent me on to the white pony's back, brought us in sight of three separate signposts. One pointed to the right and said  TO SMITH'S. Another pointed to the left, and directed us on  TO BROWN'S. While the third suggested a middle course  TO THE BEACH. We tried Smith: David knew all about it, of course. The lane to Smith's, however, brought us, with another bump, and a jerk against David, in sight of a white board that announced  TO THE BATH HOTEL, and a smaller white board informed us that by keeping to the right we should get to the SOUTH BEACH, all of

which was very gratifying as a proof of thoughtfulness and care on the part of the authorities at Flickstow. By authorities I mean Smith, Brown, the Bath and the Beaches, North and South.

The houses at Flickstow are not known by their numbers, as for instance, 3 Marine-parade, because there is no Marine-parade to be numbered. You go to Smith's, or Brown's, or Thomas's, or Thompson's; to Cleaver's Cottage, or Copple's property; but arithmetic as applicable to house-doors is comparatively, if not entirely, unknown to the natives of Flickstow.

In lodgings you're at the mercy of your tradesmen, who live two miles away, and drive to Brown's or Smith's, down the roads or over the sands. However, it's all good, whatever it is, at Flickstow; only if you're going for a short time, drive at once to the Bath Hotel, and don't bother yourself about Brown's, Smith's, or Thomas's.

David bumps me through a plantation, with an atmosphere redolent of the choicest flowers (I can notice this at the time in spite of the difficulties of giving my attention to anything except the laws of gravity); and having risked our necks down a short hill, he pulls up short, and almost pitches me, like a bundle, into the door of the Bath Hotel, Flickstow.

CHAPTER II. The Advantages of Flickstow to Families—Disadvantages to Bachelors—Advantages to ditto—Rules for Nurserymaids—The Beach of Flickstow—The Children—The Dogs—The Cows—The Horses—The Donkeys—The Flies—Inducement to the Naturalist.

ONE of the many advantages that Flickstow undoubtedly offers to families, is that the children can disport themselves on the extensive sands without fear of being run over. The benefits accruing from these sands to nurses and nursemaids are to be found in the facilities thus afforded for enjoying themselves in their own way, without any particular reference to their respective charges. The duty of a nurse is evidently to look after the children; and how can she look after them unless they stray away and require looking after? From observation, I am inclined to lay down the following rules for nursemaids at Flickstow, or any other seaside places presenting similar conveniences:

Rule 1. The nurse must be careful to dress as much like her mistress as possible; that is, if her mistress dresses well, and as a lady should, of which the nurse will be, of course, the best judge; her reason for this being, 1st, her own personal appear-

ance ; 2dly, her example to others in the same branch of the domestic service ; 3dly, for the honour of the family of which she is an adopted member ; 4thly, to cut-out the nursery-governess, if there be one ; 5thly, to obtain respect from the lower classes, such as boatmen, flymen, donkey-boys, and the like ; and 6thly, to win admiration from the lounging bachelors, officers, even non-commissioned, if in uniform, and failing these, to strike dumb the dapper young grocer's apprentice. This last object is, perhaps, included under the first head. However, I am an economist, and make both ends meet.

Now, at Flickstow, the nurse has only to take the children on to the sands, and there she can leave them ; the little things will meet lots of other little things, and the amalgamated manikins will go a-digging, a-burying one another in the sand, a-wetting their boots, a-blowing of trumpets, a-beating of drums, and a-beating of one another ' all for love,' like the Irishmen at Donnybrook, until recalled to early dinner by the charming young lady, who having passed her morning entirely to her own satisfaction, perhaps in taking rather a lengthy stroll, stands in need of that meal herself.

She can thus avoid being mixed up with the troublesome little brats, and may be taken, by a disinterested loungeur, for a lady of independent means, or a countess in disguise.

If subsequently seen, by her temporary adorer, with the children, he may, by a very little management on her part, be puzzled as to her exact relationship to them. Temporary adorer is advisedly said ; for beach-flirtations are of an evanescent character ; and the nurse, who may do us the honour to peruse these lines while the children under her care are playing about in different directions, is earnestly warned not to give her heart to anybody so permanent as the butcher. She must be torn away after three months at the longest. He remains, and the last state of that poor purveyor will be pitiable. Besides, if you visit the same spot next year, the butcher may be married, or grown more butcherly, and, perhaps, some little change may have even come over yourself. Of course your master and mistress like to see you enjoy yourself, and would prefer that their children should learn the lesson of life early in their career, by being left to shift for themselves, and to make acquaintances that may be useful to them hereafter. And, again, the spying system which you would have to adopt, if you were so peculiarly careful of the little wretches, is utterly repugnant to an English education.

Final advice to Nursemaids.—By the way, never speak of

your masters and mistresses (especially the latter) with anything like respect. If elderly, they are 'old things,' 'old cats,' and must be considered as ever on the watch to catch you tripping, or doing their best to make you slaves, and to render your lives a burden. Be demure in their presence; this is a mere act of Christian courtesy; but never lose any opportunity of abusing them behind their backs. If they are young, you can teach them their proper position, and let them learn how to manage their own children themselves.

After this digression—scarcely a digression by the way, so naturally does it spring out of the main subject—accompany me to the beach of Flickstow.

The nurses intuitively obey the above rules as regards the children, and the consequence is, that to a retiring middle-aged bachelor, who has come down for the pleasure of sweet contemplation and the luxury of abandoning shirt-collars, the beach between the hours of nine and twelve A.M. is scarcely the place most congenial to his literary pursuits or plan of meditation. He will at first be struck with the numbers of happy laughing children on the sands. Being of a contra-liberal spirit, he will with grim satisfaction quote all to himself, or to the sea, or to a dog, or to a post of the breakwater, where he may be seated, Gray's delightful sentiment about the young Etonians:

'Regardless of their doom the little victims play.'

Now, their doom being probably an interview with the headmaster, and a penitential attitude on a sort of mediæval headsman's block, between a couple of collegers (the holders-down), this line always seems to me an indication of the poet's latent animosity towards sportive youth.

He will seat himself on the beach, will our bachelor, and select the most comfortable attitude that the shingle permits. Having got over the difficulty of shingles, he will then have to make an agreement between his hat and the sun. Having achieved this, it is necessary that he should so place his book as to be able to read with perfect ease and comfort. For the attainment of this end, he must enter into further arrangements with the breeze, or else page 12 will be page 24, and page 24 will have changed to 52 before he has got a hint of the argument, or has read seventeen consecutive words. The wind is a superficial student, and skips chapters at a time. Having ingeniously made provision for this, by putting stones on the page,

he will begin to enjoy himself in reality. Nay, he may even remark that 'the Flickstow sands are first-rate for children.'

After a little time (the little things are shy at first, and otherwise engaged), they will begin 'to take notice of you,' and all their Lilliputian powers of waggery and practical joking will be expended upon you.

Be angry with them, show yourself averse to their proceedings, and they will at once treat you as an open enemy. Pretend friendship, and they'll never leave you. Roars of laughter will accompany a shovelful of sand on the nape of your neck. Shouts will announce the humorous feat of trying to make your hat into an amateur sail of the line. Your nose will be a mark for the pebble of the juvenile rifleman; your ear will be startled by the drums and fifes of the infantry; until at length you give up study on the beach as impracticable, and betake yourself to the coffee-room, where you will spend five minutes in fidgeting, or to your bedroom, which will be occupied by large flies; when you will take up Bradshaw, and try to find the earliest means of quitting Flickstow.

This process will induce calmer thoughts (if there are no flies), and you will discover that Flickstow offers, even to the bachelor, advantages which few other quiet places can boast. If the flies do not wish you to study Bradshaw, you will not be able to do it. Don't try anything against the wish of these insects, or it will spoil your temper for some time to come. Fly hunting will amuse a leisure hour, and provide you with capital exercise.

Visitors to Flickstow should bring their own fly-papers. A carpet-bag full of catch-'em-alive-ohs, would be a sweet addition to the *impedimenta*. What an admirable word that *impedimenta* is!

The Bath Hotel, Flickstow, possesses a well-stocked garden, wherein you can wander undisturbed. Here few flies will annoy you; here no children are allowed, *because of the wells which are generally left uncovered* by the thoughtful proprietor of the hotel. Hither take your book, and note book, and your camp-stool, if you've got one, for there's only one chair in the garden, whose back and seat being curiously contrived out of sharp conical shells with the points sticking out, is less for use than ornament.

The Beach of Flickstow further considered as a place for study and comfort.—I should say no, decidedly, for many reasons. Understand me, to allude to the beach proper to Flickstow, is not to mention the beach to the right of it, nor the beach to the

left of it; but the shingle whence the middle-aged bachelor has been driven by the rightful possessors, the children.

When the children are not there, the dogs are.

Such dogs! Familiar dogs, comic dogs, savage dogs, cowardly dogs—all more or less ugly dogs, or dogs of some peculiar colour unmistakable among a crowd of dogs. The familiar dog has a grievance in his coat, and once patted, will rub himself against you at short intervals, until somebody else pats him, when he'll try to rid himself of his affliction in another quarter.

The comic dog plays with your boots, barks and jumps at the sea, comes back with his fore-paws all sandy, and wipes them on your trousers. Kick at him, and he takes it for fun; speak savagely to him, and he'll growl playfully: like the previous one, there's no getting rid of him until he finds another play-fellow.

The savage dog is black, and sniffs at you. Address him, and he growls; move, and he lifts his upper lip unpleasantly. He won't stop long, but will trot off in a dignified manner.

The water-dog belongs to some one in the distance. You say at a venture, 'Hi! Neptune, there!' and throw a bit of wood or a stone into the sea. He'll bark at you until you do it again; and by threatening to jump on you (he is an uncertain dog), will keep you throwing pebbles for him until your arm aches.

Don't throw your stick for him to fetch. Not that he won't fetch it; O no: he'll do that beautifully; only being of a faithful instinct, he will insist on carrying it after he has brought it out of the water; in which case, as he won't give it up without a struggle, you will have to follow him until he reaches his owner.

When the dogs are not there, the cows are. Why they come, I don't know: except that Flickstow is one of those places where the grass of the verdant cliff meets the beach, and perhaps affords pasturage. The cows will only smell you and pass on.

If the cows are not there, the horses are. They are brought down to be washed; and their drivers holloa and shout at them during the operation. When the horses are gone, the donkeys come to be watered and rest, while their drivers take their dinner.

These drivers are boys, who, having got into a habit of yelling at their animals, can't lower their tone in addressing one another.

From all this you will escape by walking over the cliff and through the fields, or along the shore as far as ever you can go without being caught in a storm; for it never condescends to anything so common as rain at Flickstow; it hails, it thunders,

it lightens—but it never rains. Nor has the weather any rule at Flickstow. The sun shines, and down comes the hail: the sun goes in, and it is lovely weather—calm, cool, and serene. Even thunder and lightning don't see the necessity of companionship at Flickstow: now the lightning comes without the thunder, or the thunder without the lightning; and everybody is perfectly satisfied and contented in the happy marine village of Flickstow.

The butterfly-collector and ardent naturalist will be glad to learn that a curious moth, peculiar to this part of the island, appears here in the summer. By day it haunts the flowers, and looks like an enormous hornet, its powers of buzzing being equal to the combined efforts of a swarm of wasps. By night it appears in the bedrooms, where the collector may be glad of having the opportunity of getting a good view of it at close quarters. The non-collector will, it is probable, not be so overjoyed at its appearance.

This creature's tenacity of life is remarkable: after you have, as you may imagine, killed it, it generally manages to crawl away on the floor, and breathes its last in one of your stockings. It doesn't sting; at least *so they say*. The naturalist will now have an opportunity of verifying the statement.

CHAPTER III. Flickstow—Its Air—The Faculty—Tales of my Landlord—The Bath-House—Isolation of Flickstow—The Omnibuses—The Libraries—My quiet disturbed—An Arrival—The Sybarite—The Weather—The Dinner—Going to Church—Dissatisfaction—Happiness restored—The Season begins—The Organ—Incursion of Hordes—Fight of the Persecuted—Promises—Off to the quietest Place.

THAT Flickstow is most pleasantly situated, is an opinion held by the Flickstowians, the visitors to this quiet watering-place, and the proprietor of the Bath Hotel. The last-mentioned gentleman has no other name for it, when talking to his customers, than a 'little Paradise.' Flickstow, according to his unprejudiced and disinterested view, is equally beneficial to the convalescent, the downright invalid, the lusty healthy Englishman, or the consumptive delicate girl, whose only apparent chance is the South of France or Madeira.

The first question that any one meditating a stay at Flickstow will be likely to put to the landlord, will be—'The air of Flickstow is considered very good, isn't it?'

It will be given in this form as more complimentary to the people of Flickstow than supposing for one moment that they were accustomed to anything of an inferior quality, even in the way of air. The landlord's answer is guarded. He does not yet know whether you are a bachelor on the wing, a married man looking for lodgings, or one or the other wishing for apartments in his hotel.

From long practice he can, in a few minutes, tell your business in these parts, as easily as a naturalist can classify a peculiar beetle. This talent does not render him proud, but he will still 'play' you as it were, and his guess will conclude in a certainty. 'The air of Flickstow *is* considered very good,' says he. 'Yes, sir, very good.'

'Not bracing?' you say half-inquiring, half-asserting.

As a method for irritating the landlord into a violent defence of Flickstow air, and thereby exposing Flickstow's defects in the heat of his partisanship, this question must be considered as a failure. It elicits a most cautious reply, conveyed in the very quietest tone that belongs to an unruffled mind.

'Flickstow is considered decidedly bracing by the Faculty, sir,' answers the landlord, rubbing his chin very slowly. At a glance, scarcely perceptible, he sees that 'the Faculty' has disarmed you. He stoops down and plucks a blade of grass with, apparently, the same amount of purpose that guides the waiter's hand when he dusts nothing on a sideboard. This action gives you time for recovery, and the visitor comes up to the next round smiling. 'But,' objects the visitor, 'there are figs, and pears, and all sorts of fruits and flowers growing luxuriantly around, and reaching almost down to the sea. It *must* be a soft air.'

The landlord does not see the necessity. It is the most healthy place in England; the air is most bracing; and yet in the parts where the fig-trees are, as the gentleman rightly says, a consumptive person might thrive and get strong. This is his (the landlord's) opinion, and the Faculty back him up in it. The Faculty includes the leading medical men of the day, who, it appears, have all pronounced unanimously in favour of Flickstow for everybody in every possible circumstance.

You may think the air somewhat soft. The landlord pities you as unhappily opposed to the Faculty. Well, you admit, if bracing, not sufficiently bracing. Wrong again; the landlord is almost wearied with pitying you, so perversely do you put yourself in antagonism to the Faculty. The Faculty have pronounced Flickstow sufficiently bracing; so did the late Baron Alderson.

‘Did he? you say, as if this was the very last thing you would have expected.

‘Yes,’ says the landlord, slowly shaking his head.

The reminiscence being to all appearance painful, you refrain from further inquiries concerning the late lamented judge’s connection with Flickstow, and the circumstances under which he intrusted the landlord with his confidence on this point of Flickstow’s salubrity.

The visitor, with a wholesome dread of the Faculty, shifts his ground, and observes, with something of a knowing manner, ‘The winter must be a wretched time here.’

Poor gentleman! the landlord really *does* pity him now. Why, if there *is* a time when Flickstow is only one degree less delightful than in the summer, it is in the winter.

‘Why, sir,’ the landlord exclaims, ‘everything ’s a’most as green as you see it now; and to walk in that av’nue of figs, you’d think as it was summer; ah, that you would.’

The visitor looks down the avenue, and says ‘Indeed!’ Not that he doubts the landlord, but he hasn’t, at that moment, any other remark to make on the subject.

The landlord will adroitly follow up his blow, and settle the visitor once and for ever.

‘There’s capital wild-fowl shooting about here; first-rate, sir, all through the winter. The Maharajah Mint Julip Sing stays here in the winter, a’ purpose for the shooting.’

The visitor says, ‘Does he indeed?’ and probably repeats the name of the Indian potentate in a puzzled manner. ‘O, the Maharajah comes *here*, does he?’ says the visitor, as much as to infer that he (the visitor) had never, up till that moment, been able to make out where the Maharajah *did* go to in the winter; as if he was a dormouse.

The landlord finds that his visitor is unacquainted with the Maharajah, and pities him more than ever.

‘When first the Maharajah come down here, he took nearly the whole hotel for his friends and his servants, and suchlike,’ says the landlord. All his recollections of the Maharajah henceforth appear as an institution of so many personal comparisons between the Maharajah and the unfortunate visitor. The latter feels almost inclined to beg his host’s pardon for not immediately ordering all the rooms in his hotel, and, in a general way, for not being the Maharajah Mint Julip Sing.

‘Yes, he took the whole house,’ the landlord repeats, laughing gently to himself, as if the fact was some most excellent joke,

as indeed it was to *him*, 'and had a yacht down here, and a punt, and went out shooting every day. "Browning," says he to me, "Browning," says he, "don't call me your Royal Highness," says he. "Why not, your Royal Highness?" I says to him; I used always to call the prince that. "Because," says he—he could talk English as well as you or me could, sir—"because," says he, "I'd rather be a plain Suffolk squire, Browning, than all the royal highnesses in the world." That's what the prince wanted. The prince says to me, "Browning," says he, "I only wishes to be a Suffolk man, and if they'd let me be it, I would." And he would too,' adds the landlord, knocking a few ashes out of his pipe; 'he's a most affable gentleman is the Maharajah, and there ain't no nonsense about him.'

The visitor, in deference to Mr. Browning's opinion, tries to look as affable as he can, and have as little nonsense about him as possible under the circumstances. In the due carrying out of this attempt, he does not like to cut short the landlord's narrative by leaving him suddenly, or by expressing himself to the effect that the story of Julip Sing might, without any diminution of the interest, be carried over until to-morrow, and continued in the next evening's series of *Tales of my Landlord*.

Mr. Browning, however, knows when he has got a listener, and fixes him.

'He wanted me,' continues the landlord, scarcely keeping his pipe alight, so fully is he enjoying the luxury of an undisturbed narration, 'to take him in last year. "I'm very sorry, your royal highness," says I,—it was about this time, when we're always quite full' (Flickstow quite full in July, says the visitor to himself), — "I'm very sorry," says I, "but I can't do it." "O yes you can," the prince says to me. "I can't do it," I told him; "if you was to offer me all your jewels, your highness," says I jokingly.'

The visitor supposes that the Maharajah must have laughed at this humorous conceit of Mr. Browning's.

'He did,' says the landlord more to himself than to the questioner, as if a prince's laughter was not a matter for vulgar joking. 'I couldn't take him in. I was obliged to say to him, as I would to any one' (Visitor notes the landlord's independence), ' "If your royal highness wants rooms in the hotel, you must give us notice some time beforehand, or else we're full." '

The visitor learns the moral thus pleasantly conveyed. He also learns that Flickstow at certain seasons is full; and this

intelligence, if he really be in search of quiet, will naturally enough scare him away from Flickstow.

But Flickstow might be full to suffocation, and yet remain the home of the solitary, that is, within certain limits. These boundaries are the martello tower on the right, and the second breakwater beyond the flight of steps that leads up to the top of the cliff on the left.

Again, Flickstow, as a rule, dines at midday, and sleeps like a boa-constrictor until the evening, when Flickstow, being lively in the prospect of tea or supper, disports itself on the beach. If the lover of solitude dines at seven, and takes his walks abroad during the afternoon, he will be unmolested by children ; and the only creature at all resembling his fellow man that he will meet is one of the coastguard.

Mr. Browning's house is the Bath Hotel, so called because there is a bath-house in the garden. Were Flickstow anything but what it is, the bath-house of a hotel, where hot and cold baths are given, situated in a garden at ever so short a distance from the house (and you have to go down hill to it), would be an inconvenience.

Dress as you will, no one will see you ; and if they do, none will notice you, except the boys who drive the goat-chaises and wallop the donkeys. The latter, however, will not be astonished by your appearance.

At Flickstow the world may be soon forgotten, that is, if you rise before Flickstow is out of bed, sit on a part of the beach unfrequented by Flickstow, walk when Flickstow dines, and dine while Flickstow walks, and be asleep before Flickstow is even thinking of feeling tired. An occasional tourist, or some one in search of lodgings, whom you may come across in the parlour (there is no coffee-room), will give you tidings of the outer world, and will present you with the *Times* of that day. The arrival of a newspaper or letters at Flickstow is a matter of much excitement, on account of its uncertainty.

A letter *may* take two days or more in reaching London, and your paper has probably afforded much amusement to several people on its journey to you.

No one can get nearer to Flickstow than five miles, including a ferry, on one side, and twelve miles in an omnibus on the other.

The omnibuses are divided into two classes ; one is pretty fair, and the other is execrably bad. Both will serve your turn in fine weather, but only the former when it pours, as the latter

lets in the rain through some cracks in the roof, and the windows are of such a peculiarly ingenious construction, that, once being let down in order to obtain air for the half-stifled damp 'insides,' no available leverage is sufficiently powerful to bring them up again; so that, what with the shower-bath of a roof, and the douche at your back, but for the look of the thing and the cleanliness of your boots, you might as well have been walking, as the contented Irishman said when the bottom of the sedan-chair fell out.

Both these vehicles run to and fro between Flickstow and Ipswich.

Flickstow possesses a church. When you ask where it is, you are told it is 'across the fields.' No one here has any distinct idea of distance, nor of the existence of any means of conveyance beyond a 'bus and a ferry-boat. Every place inland is 'across the fields.'

Flickstow also boasts of a circulating library adjoining the tap, and situated in a corner of the hotel garden, where the lending of books is combined with a trade in wooden spades, envelopes, sand-boots, and china ornaments. Mudie's list of two years ago still finds favour in the eyes of the higher educated classes of Flickstow.

There is another circulating library of a conservative character (the Mudie one is of liberal and progressive tendencies), which is contained in a wooden toyshop (itself as much like a toy as anything within) on the beach. From these shelves the middle-aged and elderly readers of Flickstow gather their literary honey, and denounce the other shop near the tap, Mudie and all his works. Here, wishing to patronise the indigenous merchandise, the visitor may purchase some stones, supposed to be 'precious,' and certainly deserving the epithet in one sense, any tin ornaments that may suit his fancy, studs of a dullish metal under a glass case, spades and sand-boots in opposition to the other circulating library, and by paying a penny a day he may store his mind with such specimens of an elegant style as *The Wonderful Adventures of Mrs. Seacole*, *The Confessor*, *The Albatross*, *Father Darcey* (author unknown), *Aristomenes*, *The Idol demolished by its own Priest* (No. 87 in the book), *Incidents of Missionery Enterprise* (including the spelling), and *Elizabeth, or the Exiles of Siberia*. The last was in hand when I asked for it.

In ten days' time I became accustomed to the dulness. I was cheerful, but subdued. A friend of mine, a Sybarite, wrote to me to say that he would come and spend a day or two with

me, on his road somewhere else. I was pleased, but not excited. When he arrived he was excited, but not pleased. He had travelled with eight very wet peasants, some odd baskets, and a hip-bath, in the miserable conveyance hereinbefore mentioned ; and had been sitting in a pool of water with the impracticable window open at his back, and a boy smoking bad cigars (and allowed so to do by the admiring rusties within) by his side. Within two miles of Flickstow, he with four of the gentler sex, and a baby, who, when it was not taking suction out of a bottle, was crying bitterly, was taken out of the 'bus to finish his journey in a fly ; when the Sybarite was obliged to ride outside to oblige the ladies.

The Sybarite insisted upon having a view of the sea, both from his sitting-room and his bedroom, and, in fact, from any part of the house where he might happen to be. What had I ordered for dinner ? asked the Sybarite.

Now hitherto I had, for the sake of peace and quiet, left it to the landlady, who invariably catered for me to the very best of her ability, and therewith I had been content. When, therefore, I told the Sybarite that I didn't know, he evidently began to question my sanity. 'Fish, of course,' said he.

I said, 'Yes, I hope so ;' and I really did hope so, for previous experience of Sybarites informs me that an undined Sybarite is the most disagreeable companion possible for one entire evening. He was sitting at what it amused me to call 'my end of the coffee-room,' at a window commanding the sea. This end of the public parlour (coffee-room by courtesy) I had, by the ingenious device of getting the waitress to close the folding-doors, fashioned into a private dining-room for my own particular use. With this contrivance I confess to have been as much pleased as was Robinson Crusoe with his original hut.

The Sybarite found fault with it on the spot. Why couldn't we have a private room ? he asked. I felt that my interest, somehow or another, was bound up with the landlord's. I explained to him that the hotel was full.

'Full ?' cried the Sybarite. 'Do people come *here* ! What's this room ?'

I explained, in order to put him in a good humour, that it was my dodge—dodge was the playful word I used—for being private.

My ideal privacy was somewhat unduly disturbed by the entrance of a party of six persons at least, whom we couldn't see, but could hear, who had come into the adjoining compart-

ment to have some tea, and who did not possess a single 'H' among them.

'Very quiet,' sneered my friend.

I knew it was not very quiet as well as he did, but I was getting angry, and felt bound to defend the general still life of Flickstow. I told him that this was not Brighton. He thanked me for the information sarcastically. I explained that he must expect to rough it a little at Flickstow. He replied, that if he had known *that*, he would have seen Flickstow—in fact, he'd have gone elsewhere. He wished me distinctly to understand that it was *my* presence at Flickstow that had induced him to come out of his way, when he was, in point of fact, actually on his road, as he had before informed me, 'elsewhere.' I was annoyed at his assuming this tone with me, but I struggled heroically with my feelings, and trusted in the emollient effects of dinner.

It came at last.

'Soles,' said I, rubbing my hands; 'capital!'

Of course they were the *only* fish he couldn't touch. Never mind him, he said, in a resigned tone, he would wait for the meat. In the mean time, what wine was there?

Sherry? bring some sherry, a pint.

The sherry came. The Sybarite with a sneer asked me if I drank *that* muck every day. Now I pride myself on being rather a judge of wine, and I did not like to confess, that not only had I drank *that* muck every day since my arrival, but that I had rather liked it than otherwise. So I pretended not to know anything about it, and laid down, as a general rule, that it was better not to take sherry at such small inns as this.

'What *did* I drink, then?' he wanted to know.

I informed him that my invariable beverage was the lightest possible claret, with, I added guardedly, water, or soda-water.

That wouldn't do for him.

What meat was there? 'A nice dish of veal cutlets, done on purpose for me; come, let me help you.'

This I said in my cheeriest tone.

'What did I say? Cutlets?'

'Yes,' I answered. 'Veal cutlets.'

Ah! of all the things that the Sybarite detested, veal cutlets were the most loathsome.

His dislike almost took away my appetite. Luckily they found him some cold beef, which he ordered to be minced, and salad, which he mixed himself.

After dinner, feeling more charitable towards the world, my friend lighted his cigar. His enjoyment was of short duration. I had forgotten that we were still in the public coffee-room, and that through the folding-doors the smoke could penetrate. And that it did this, was very soon evident by the feminine coughing in the next division; and after a short duet between basso and soprano, a bell was rung, and in another three minutes the landlord himself came in and rebuked *me* for allowing the Sybarite to smoke. I could not plead ignorance of the rules, nor the fact of the folding-doors being illicitly closed. After appeasing the landlord, I beguiled my wrathful friend into the greenhouse, where he was bothered by the large moths, and utterly losing his temper retired to bed, vowing that he would be off the first thing in the morning.

The next day being Sunday (he had intended staying from Saturday till Monday), he determined to pick his way to church. As he generally carries a small library with him, the proceeding was somewhat tedious, seeing that the roads were in some places almost impassable, on account of yesterday's heavy rains. He had heard that there was to be a grand high-church service two miles off at a neighbouring village; and eschewing the Use of Flickstow, he took his road 'across the fields.'

We reached the church at half-past eleven, and the people were just coming out. It appeared that the service had commenced at ten o'clock on that Sunday, as the clergyman had to serve two other parishes in the day. This visit did not strike me as in any way improving the Sybarite's temper. On Sunday he ordered dinner, complained of the cooking, found the bitter beer (bottled) flat, the draught beer sour, and was impatient of the claret. He subsided into brandy-and-water, and an early bed.

He went away grumbling on Monday. What account he gave of the place and my mode of living, I am at a loss to know.

He had come like the serpent into Paradise, and had left me dissatisfied with my position.

I became restless. I couldn't read; I couldn't write. I fell to complaining that the papers did not arrive daily, and of the postal irregularity. I ordered no more sherry, and became suspicious of the lightest claret. On the third day after his departure, my equanimity was partially restored. On the fourth day a stranger visiting the inn, praised the sherry, and was delighted with Flickstow. He was an elderly man, and, from what

I gathered from his conversation, was a member of the Athenæum, and was on speaking terms with five members of Parliament and a couple of Bishops. Such an authority was of greater weight than the Sybarite, and my placid happiness was re-established.

I should have remained there, but that, alas ! the season began in real earnest.

An organ began it. While I was meditating over a metaphysical work, and inventing a theory about the complex action of memory and will, I heard *La mia Letizia* played by a whistling itinerant musician.

I shook my fist at him, and stopped my ears with my fingers. He laughed at my expressive pantomime, as if I was doing it to amuse him, and touched his cap to me. I betake me to my notes.

‘Go away !’ He won’t : not a bit of it. Children belonging to a recently-arrived family are at the window, whistling, chuckling, crowing, dance a baby diddy ! Ha ! ha ! Out I go, far over the sands.

Flickstow, according to matutinal custom, is out on the beach.

What is this change that has come over the spirit of my dream ?

What is this pop, pop, popping ? Can I believe my eyes ? Near the circulating library is a large target, and a woman making a fortune at two shots a penny, and prizes in an untold heap of nuts.

I hear some one say that the Volunteers will meet here next week, and that there are going to be fireworks on the sands.

I am a mile away from Flickstow. Quiet reigns around me. (This is a note I find in my pocket-book, dated on the identical day of the incursion of the savage hordes.) A boatful of people comes on shore. They jump out. They are calling to other people somewhere else in my neighbourhood. Hampers are appearing. Other people from somewhere else halloo back again, and exchange badinage. It appears that the latter party have just dined, and are consequently exhilarated. Another halloo, more distant still (just where I was going to walk quietly), announces a party actually at dinner. I see it all. I have dropped down right in the middle of a pic-nic. As I continue my walk onwards, they make remarks on my personal appearance. When I return, two hours afterwards, they are still there, dancing with

a fiddle, and, as far as badinage goes, as lively as ever ; as far as practical joking is concerned, livelier.

The landlord informed me that there are pic-nics on the beach 'a'most every day.'

The next morning the proceedings were opened by a brass band. I wandered into the garden ; but people were beforehand with me, walking up and down, looking at the sea and the ships through glasses.

I went on to the beach ; there were the children, the donkeys, the two shots a penny for nuts, two negro delineators, bathers, and farther on the pic-nic parties.

I walked inland by the marine cottages, and working-men rushed out upon me, supposing that I was in search of lodgings. I was driven back to my room. The band had not moved. Such a band ! Five small boys, with the largest and worst specimens of wind-instruments, and a drum, led by an elderly fiend on a cornet.

I looked at the map. To-morrow, said I, I go to Suthold.

That evening, while the landlord was recounting to me, for the twenty-second time, the doings of his friend the Maharajah Julip Sing, I took occasion to mention to him how much it grieved me to be obliged to leave Flickstow. Flickstow quiet, said I, is beyond comparison delightful ; but Flickstow noisy is execrable.

Mr. Browning, albeit a landlord, owned that he preferred Flickstow quiet ; although Flickstow, quiet or noisy, was undeniably recommended by the Faculty, I must recollect that. He begged me to see it in the winter, when I might have the opportunity of going out shooting wild ducks with his Royal Highness the Prince Maharajah Mint Julip Sing, with the great gun, and in the punt bestowed upon our obliging landlord by that munificent foreigner.

If I could, I said heartily, I would. And if I can, I will ; for Flickstow is like 'Charley Mount, a pleasant place in the glorious month of July ;' and in every other month, were it not for the festive incursions, which may delight some good folks, but did not me. The ancient name of this marine village was Felix Stow ; but modern pronunciation has clipped it into the form Flickstow, as I have here written it.

My last moments at the hotel were rendered miserable by three juvenile members of one family attempting to play 'Pop goes the weasel' with one family finger, on the untuned notes of a cabinet piano. Bedtime and nurse removed them. The next

morning I took—having previously ordered it with much attention to detail—the best phaeton that Flickstow could provide.

In this melancholy machine I made for Suthold, which was, I was told, without exception the quietest place on the east coast, or, in fact, in England.

So to Suthold I went. By the way, my landlord didn't say that the Faculty recommended Suthold.

COX AND FIVE:

The terrible Adventure in a Railway Carriage.

‘I SAY, Baby, come now, you’ve had your glass, so don’t look anxiously at the bottle; pass it on, and eat as many biscuits as you like; Snipe advises them.’

‘Just half a glass more, Tomkins.’

‘No, not a drop, Baby, or hanged if I don’t tell Snipe. If you don’t know how to take care of yourself, I must look after you. Come, pass the fruity at once, you silly little thing.’

The ‘silly little thing,’ commonly known in New College as ‘Baby,’ was a brawny, sandy-whiskered, good-natured giant, weighing fourteen stone to a pound, who had just gone into training for the University race. Snipe, by mentioning whose name Tomkins had compelled his friend to pass the bottle without filling his glass, was the University coxswain. Having steered the dark blue in two winning races, and having the smallest person in the University, with, without exception, the loudest voice, Snipe was looked upon as a model of what a coxswain should be. It was generally known through the University that Snipe was the only man in Oxford whom the captain ever condescended to consult in the selection of his crew, and that the training of the men was left entirely to his discretion; so his influence among boating men was unbounded.

At the beginning of the week the captain, together with Snipe and Hurdles, the editor of a well known sporting journal, and an old University oar, had been noticed for more than an hour pacing up and down the pavement outside Exeter. Hurdles had given his opinion that the boat had not enough strength, and that five should be turned out for a heavier man. Several men had been mentioned for the new five. Snipe was for Bowling of Christchurch; but both Hurdles and the captain were inclined to try Baby Smith of New.

‘Baby is a fine oar,’ said Snipe, ‘no doubt, but won’t train. Now guess, Hurdles, what that fellow did last May races.’

‘Can’t guess at all,’ said Hurdles, lighting his pipe.

‘Well, you know, both of you, I am the last man in the world to hurt a fellow’s character, especially an old schoolfellow ; but what I am going to say I say for the good of the ’Varsity. Smith, on the very first day of the race, ate pastry in hall ! Ah ! and that’s not the worst—toasted cheese that fellow had for supper ! though the captain of the New College boat besought him, almost on his knees, to have oatmeal porridge instead. Why, I should not have thought worse of him if he had eaten a whole cucumber. My faith in that fellow is shaken, and have I not cause, eh ?’

‘Certainly, old fellow,’ said the captain. ‘Still, you know, he might turn over a new leaf. Now he is more likely to be afraid of you than any one else. S’pose now you trot down to New, see him in private, speak solemnly and firmly to him, tell him we will try him for a week, if he promises to train, and not make a fool of himself any more. Eh, Hurdles, isn’t that our form ?’

Hurdles took a long pull at his pipe, and nodded oracularly. ‘We’ll try him ; but I have not much faith in a man who eats toasted cheese.’

Snipe started off at once, and found Smith in an arm-chair before the fire reading *Bell’s Life*, with a pewter of beer on the floor beside him.

‘Baby,’ he said, ‘I wish to have a little real serious talk with you.’

The Baby, who had risen from his chair as Snipe entered, looked wonderingly down on the earnest face of the coxswain, in his official blue coat and straw hat, who scarcely reached up to the third button of his waistcoat, which he had taken hold of.

‘Well, old fellow, what is it ?’ he said.

‘I say, Baby, how should you like to take Sniffles’ place—five—in the ’Varsity ?’ said Snipe, with an air of supreme patronage.

‘Uncommon,’ said Smith, whose chief ambition, lazy fellow as he was, was to earn his dark blue. ‘Uncommon, Snipe. Take some beer.’

‘My Baby,’ said Snipe reproachfully, ‘you must lay aside these weaknesses. Promise me, before I speak more to you, for my time is precious, that you will train.’

‘Yes, Snipe, old fellow, of course I’ll train.’

‘Well then, Baby, no more beer, except a pint at dinner ; a mile’s run before breakfast ; get up at seven ; bed at ten ; gruel previous ; no more getting festive at wines ; one glass of fruity,

never more unless I see you are getting low, then I may stick it on again. How much do you weigh?

‘Fourteen stone, to a pound. Weighed yesterday.’

‘How much last races?’

‘Thirteen stone five.’

‘Well, then, run two miles every morning instead of one, put a little nitre in your gruel; and we will give you a trial, down at the boats, at two. Try to get down four pounds, then tell me. Come, begin at once. Adieu, mon enfant!’

As Snipe ceased speaking he took the beer and emptied it into the coal-scuttle, and walked across the court to Tomkins’ rooms.

‘Tomkins,’ he said, ‘I am going to give Baby Smith a trial; keep your eye on him, and see that he trains.’

Tomkins promised to keep his eye on his old schoolfellow Smith, whom he could remember a little white-haired boy at Winchester, the smallest boy in the school, when he had gained the name of ‘Baby,’ which, like most names given at Winchester, clung to him for ever after. Tomkins was a man who never undertook a thing without thoroughly doing his duty in it. Being a reading man himself, with no muscles, he took the greatest pride in those of his friend: every morning before seven, Tomkins made his appearance in Smith’s rooms, and would not leave them till he saw him safe out of bed; every night at half-past nine, Tomkins was to be seen in Baby’s room hanging over a saucepan, where was simmering the regulation feed of oatmeal porridge; or tenderly plastering-up any raw places on the hands or elsewhere, which the day’s row might have caused. The ‘Baby’ was a sociable, and what was commonly called at New College, rather a festive man, and no exhortations of his friend could induce him to take his glass of wine in private, and leave his corner next the fire at the end of the horseshoe table in the junior Common room, where the men drank their wine after hall. Tomkins, finding that nothing could keep his friend from the society and merriment of the Common room, although he much preferred the quiet of his own rooms to the heavy Carbonel port and noise, sacrificed himself every night, so as to be able to keep his eye on his charge.

The boat had, on the day when the conversation recorded at the commencement of my story took place, gone for its first long row over the entire course, and the Baby was unusually thirsty, and inclined to break through the *régime* which Snipe had laid down for the boat.

‘Horrid fellow, that Snipe, I do think,’ said Smith, as he took a biscuit from the dish and munched it moodily, looking wistfully at the glass on the opposite side of the table, which had just been filled by its owner. ‘Horrid little fellow; trains too hard; bow got a boil on his thumb. Snipe sees it, tells him to take another glass; “Rather too low,” says Snipe, as if he could know you fellows. Wish sometimes I could get a boil. Don’t think much of Snipe’s training, eh?’

‘Good cox’en, very,’ said an Exeter man sitting at the end of the table. ‘Scarce seven stone, peacoat and all; voice like a brass band; keeps the boat in order well. How he sat on bow just to-day, for catching that crab; plenty of cheek. Talking about cheek, do you remember Snipe’s terrible railway accident, as we used to call it, eh, Tomkins?’

‘Just about do remember it,’ said Tomkins; ‘tell it to Scrimpton; he may not have heard it. Baby, it’s your particular story.’

‘Well,’ said Smith, ‘here goes, though telling stories is not training, seeing it makes one so dry. Think I might eat an orange, Tomkins?’

‘Yes, Baby, I think you might; not too much sugar, and don’t eat any of the peel; here is a ripe one.’

‘Give us a catch, then; here goes. Well, you know, Scrimpton, and all you other fellows who have not heard me tell the story fifty times before, I consider Snipe went through more in that hour which I am going to tell you about, than most fellows do in a lifetime. I consider a man’s feelings looking out of the behind third-class carriage of an excursion train, and seeing the express spurting into it, are not to be compared with Snipe’s feelings. Talk about cheek, if ever man required cheek, Snipe did then. Tell me about people being shut up with madmen, boa-constrictors, and bowie-knives in the same compartment. I say their feelings can be nothing to those of Snipe when he was shut up with an old lady and her two daughters for a whole hour, under the following distressing circumstances. Well, you know, Snipe and I are old friends, Winchester men both of us. One whole holiday it was settled that we were to play a cricket-match on the Durford ground—the College *versus* “Durford Duffers.” I was captain of our eleven in those days, and used to keep wickets. Snipe was cover point, and as neat a batter all round as ever we had in my time, though of course he was too short to have much reach. Men used to laugh when Snipe came in, pitched him up slows, not wishing to be hard on the little fellow, as they used to say. This used to rile Snipe a bit. Left-

handed corporal in garrison match chaffed Snipe, and gave him a slow ; Snipe catches the ball half-volley, hits it back so sharp in the fellow's face, knocks two teeth down his throat ; did the same thing in the Eton match once, then followed it up with a sixer over the pavilion. Well, you know, Durford is several stations from Winchester. We got there at ten exactly ; when I got on to the platform I counted my men. " One short," said I, " and blest if it is not our cover point, Snipe. Who knows anything of Snipe ?"

' No one had seen him get into the train, so I knew he had missed it.

" Pretty job," said I to the guard, as he came up to me, seeing I had missed something ; " I have left my cover point behind."

" Your what, sir ?" asked the guard, thinking I meant some sort of carpet-bag ; " have you looked into the luggage-van, and was it directed ?"

" No," said I, " it's a friend I have left ; it isn't likely he should be in the van. When is the next train from Winchester ?"

" Express at 10.30 stops here : come by that, no doubt, sir."

" I hope so," said I, as I watched the train start screaming off again. A drag was waiting at the station to take us and some of the Duffers to the ground, who had come by the same train as we had.

" Harris," I said to our bowler, " you and the other fellows had better go on in the drag, as of course they won't wait. I shall wait for the express, and come on with Snipe. Toss up ; if you win, take first innings ; go in yourself with Whistles ; if they get first innings, say they must wait till we come."

' I watched the fellows drive off, and then walked down into the village, where I engaged a yellow post-chaise to be at the station to meet the express.

' Never did an hour go slower. I tried to make out a cross-road journey to Birmingham on the bills on the station ; read Thorley's advertisement over at least fifty times ; looked into the box of yellow grease, and wished it was ices ; asked the station-master questions about the expense of removing a fictitious horse to London, pretending that I felt the greatest anxiety that he should not catch cold. Then I went and asked the porter to weigh me ; and still the time seemed, with all my varied amusements, as if it would never go.

' But if that hour was terrible to me, how infinitely more so was it to Snipe !

‘A new pair of patent-leather boots, which he could not force on, had made him too late for the ’bus. As he was coming up through the Close, some butcher’s boy made a remark about his being sixpennorth of ha’pence too short for the bat he was carrying on his shoulder, and which the pads tied round it made look larger than it really was. Snipe, the most touchy fellow that ever lived, threw down his bat, and at once attacked the boy, whom he sent howling off with two black eyes in a very short time ; but, expeditious as he had been, his contest made him just too late ; the train was off as he reached the station-doors, which were barred against him.

‘However, Snipe made himself comfortable at the station, where there was a refreshment-room and bottled beer, advantages which the Durford station did not enjoy. When the express came thundering in, Snipe, always a bit of a swell, gets into an empty first-class carriage. After some time, it occurred to him that he would be preventing delay on the ground if he was to put-on his flannel trousers in the train, instead of waiting till he got to the pavilion, which had been his first intention. “Guard,” said he, as he showed his ticket, “do you stop anywhere before you get to Durford?” “Yes, sir, at Maldon and Melvin ; that is all though.” Now, it seems that Snipe fancied Maldon was a station close to Durford ; and so believing that there was no hurry, and that the train would not stop for at least half an hour, he set leisurely to work to arrange his cricketing toilet. After having removed his trousers, he proceeded quietly to fold them up. The carpet-bag was very small, and Snipe being a neat fellow, tightly tied up the garments he had removed before he undid the bag.

‘Just as he was feeling for the key in his pocket, he became aware that the train was diminishing its speed ; still, he felt so sure that it must be another twenty minutes before Maldon could be reached, that he did not feel uneasy.

‘He had searched two pockets in vain for the key, when the fearful fact flashed upon him that the train was actually stopping. The side-pocket of his coat he had not tried ; in desperation, he thrust his hand into it, but only succeeded in bringing out with the lining some pennies, which rolled in a vague, irresolute manner, as only pennies can roll, along the floor of the carriage. As he looked up he saw the engine-sheds of Maldon station, and heard the break screaming on the wheels, which had almost ceased to move.

‘Feeling that it was his only chance, he snatched at the

trousers he had just removed, and tried to unfasten them, but the knots were tight, and refused to come undone; before he had unfastened the first, the train stopped. In his horror and desperation—for he declares that it amounted to that—he clutched at his travelling rug, and wrapped it round his legs, feeling himself, at least for a time, safe. He was seated on a seat nearest the platform, facing the engine, and so had a view of all the passengers. His spirits began to revive as he saw there were no ladies on the platform, only an old woman and two mechanics, who soon took their seats in a second-class carriage.

‘Just as the guard whistled for the engine-driver to start, the door of the booking-office flew open, and a stout elderly lady, bearing in her arms a King Charles’s spaniel, and followed by her two daughters, bustled on to the platform.

‘Now, ma’am, what class?—make haste—the train’s off,” said the guard.

“First,” gasped the old lady. “I’ve paid for the dog; see, here is the ticket. Come along, girls.”

“This way, ladies. No luggage, you say. Now, sir, would you mind moving for the ladies?”

‘It was impossible for Snipe to move without betraying his secret. He had not had time even to replace his shoes; and as the stout lady bustled past him, muttering something to her daughters about real gentlemen being obliging, she trod on his uncovered feet.

‘It was as much as poor Snipe could do to conceal a cry of pain. One of the young ladies had noticed him wince as her mother entered, and whispered to her loud enough for him to hear, that she feared the poor young gentleman had something the matter that prevented him from moving.

‘The old lady not having yet forgiven Snipe for not rising to allow her to pass, grunted indignantly, and placed the dog on the floor. What should the little beast do but make an incursion under the seat to where Snipe was seated. After having sniffed suspiciously round his feet, making an occasional dash at any place where he detected a portion of his red stockings visible, he turned all his attention to the boots, which had been hastily kicked under the seat.

‘Snipe says, and I can quite believe him, that he has hated the sight of a King Charles’ ever since. Fancy the fellow’s feelings when he knew the creature was biting to pieces his new patent leathers, within a few inches of his feet, which he dared

not move for fear of the dog laying hold of them, much less attempt to kick him.

‘In the course of another half hour the train stopped at Melvin. Snipe was in hopes that the ladies might be going to get out, as it was evident, from their having no luggage, that they did not intend to go a very long journey. However, when the train stopped they made no move; so Snipe gave himself up to despair, as he knew that in a few minutes he must either get out at Durford, and betray the whole affair, or make up his mind to miss the match and keep in his seat till the ladies got out. When the train stopped, who should he see on the platform but Bunting, who had been in one eleven, and had just left. “Hallo, Snipe, old fellow,” he said, referring to the Eton match when Snipe had got out first ball; “and how are you after your sad luck? How was it?”

“A shooter shattered my leg stump,” answered Snipe.

‘As Snipe said this, the young ladies looked compassionately at him.

“O mamma,” the youngest whispered, “how we must have hurt him getting into the carriage! his leg shattered, poor fellow; his leg stumps by a shooter! He must have been shot before. Don’t you think it is the brave young officer we read of? Sharpshooters, I daresay. How sad and interesting!”

‘Snipe could hear no more; as Bunting, who had gone to speak to a man in the next carriage, returned, and asked him if he expected to meet any one at Durford, as he was so late.

“Baby is sure to be there,” he said.

“Eh! if the others go on, trust him not to leave you behind.”

“How young he looks to have a baby!” whispered one sister to another.

‘Just as the train was starting, an excursionist in a white hat and black band round it, who was waiting for the excursion train for the Southampton races, looked into the carriage, and having stared impudently at the ladies, turned to Snipe, and asked him how his poor feet were.

“Impudent, unfeeling wretch!” said the youngest lady, no longer able to restrain her feelings, her pretty face flushing with indignation. “O, sir, we are so sorry for you; indeed, indeed we are! And O, why did you not tell us? I know we must have hurt you so, getting into the carriage.”

‘Then all three began talking at once, apologising, questioning, and pitying, till Snipe said he could have cried with shame,

he felt himself such an impostor. Still, as he said, it put him up to a dodge; for when he reached the station, I found him lying back in apparent exhaustion, with one of the fair ladies holding her scent-bottle to his nose, and the other, with tears running down her pretty cheeks, fanning him with a *Times* newspaper; as the little scamp, to avoid answering the questions which had grown rather searching about his accident, had pretended to faint.

"For heaven's sake, Snipe," I said, opening the door, "what is the matter?"

"Ah, my Baby," he said, pretending to wake up,—“I mean, my dear medical man,” correcting himself, and turning to the ladies, “bend down your ear,—I am too ill to speak almost.”

‘Thinking the fellow really dying, I bent over him.

“For goodness’ sake,” he said, “pretend to be my medical man;—carry me out, and keep the cloth tight round me.”

“Now, sir,” said the guard, “look sharp.”

‘Without another word, I caught hold of Snipe, and carried him to my yellow fly; but it was not till we were out of the station-yard that he seemed to revive, when he said,

“I say, old chap, got an extra pair of flannel trousers, eh? mine are under the seat.” Then he told me the whole story; and if that fellow has not got cheek, I don’t know who has.’

FROM DULL COURT TO FAIRVIEW

CULTIVATE the friendship of friends who have houses at the seaside! It was the advice—oft repeated and gratuitously given, though by a lawyer—of my friend John Jackson, of the Outer Temple. It was always the remark with which he prefaced his farewell on the eve of his departure from town for some of the many watering-places at which he was sure of a billet. On every possible occasion John Jackson would escape from his dingy chambers, and, as he expressed it, ‘reinvigorate the inner and the outer man by contact with Neptune’s own peculiar;’ and he spoke of going out of town for a day or so as glibly, and with as much certainty of going, as the owner of a yacht and of a score of ‘seaside places’ might have done. John used to explain, almost apologetically, the necessity he was under of going away. He knew how many cubic feet of oxygen ought to pass through the lungs of a man of given size in order to give that man a healthy body; he knew to a fraction of an inch how many cubic feet of air were contained in his own apartments, how many cubic feet of carbonic acid gas were given off from his lungs in the four-and-twenty hours; and he reckoned, by an exceedingly subtle process, which he often tried to make me understand, the extent to which his system suffered if for more than a given time it was subjected to treatment which did not allow of its getting a suitable proportion of fresh air. The results of his calculations were threefold: his rooms, which for professional reasons he could not give up, were declared not to admit the necessary amount of oxygen for the support of John Jackson’s vitality; John Jackson vacated them on every possible occasion, including Saturday to Monday occasions; and John Jackson ever returned from his jaunts the fresher and the merrier and the better in health.

Yet John Jackson had not the wherewithal to be so constantly on the tramp, and to bear the cost of hotel charges—

especially seaside hotel charges; still less had he means to defray those numerous incidental expenses which are the invariable accompaniments of 'outing,' be they never so short. Jackson's practice was by no means large (I used to think it suffered by Jackson's wanderings, though he ever affirmed the contrary), and his private means were, I had reason to know, small; how then could he manage to humour his vagabond desires, and get those supplies of ozone and other exhilarating things which he declared to be necessary to his existence? He acted up to the spirit and letter of the advice he so generously gave to his friends—he cultivated the friendship of friends who had houses at the seaside.

Yes; but friends with houses at the seaside! How many such do you and I, reader, reckon in our respective circles? Not enough, I trow, to admit of such wholesale visits as John Jackson used to make without our running the risk of sponging. Precisely. But that is the very point on which John Jackson used to be so careful. Never once did he meet the cold shoulder, or the reception of the intruder; he had far too keen an eye to the proprieties of the subject, far too thin a skin, to act like one who forces his way, or courts a hint that his room would be more acceptable than his company. He had a wonderful knack of picking up friends, a very genius for it. No one knew better than he the necessity of first catching your hare before you proceed to cook him; and aware of this necessity it became an unconscious habit of Jackson's life to be picking up friends on every occasion; and by a habit which he exercised almost as unconsciously he winnowed friends who had seaside houses from friends who had none. By a sort of instinct, mesmeric attraction, or what other quality you will, John Jackson was ever drawn at a dinner-party towards those very members of the company who had the means of supplying his wants; surely, though without absolute design, he would ingratiate himself with them, and the result was invariably an invitation to So-and-so 'whenever Mr. Jackson liked to come.' At this stage, if anywhere, my friend Jackson was guilty of a little finessing. He knew—who does not?—that a general invitation is one of those insubstantial things which rarely admit of being handled; and it was his wont, when a general invitation was given, to force his inviter's hand by immediately following up his acceptance of the kind offer, with a statement that he was engaged, 'he was afraid' (the hypocrite!) for this week and the next, but that on Saturday fortnight—naming a certain day convenient to himself, and by which time the limited supply of ozone in Dull Court would be exhausted—

‘he should be exceedingly happy to present himself at Sea View;’ and he always clenched the matter by an appeal for information as to the most suitable trains, and somehow or other managed to suggest the propriety of sending a carriage for him if the station from Sea View happened to be far from that pleasant place.

Once in a place as visitor, John Jackson was sure to be asked again and again. He was a charming companion, and always a great friend with the children, whose horse, bear, and frog he was, and who knew he would play at sleeping giant (‘only pretend sleep, you know’), as often and as long as they pleased. Jackson was always on good terms with the lady of the house; never *would* smoke in the dining-room, though pressed to do so by his host, if he had any inkling that the hostess disliked—and most hostesses *do* dislike—the smell of stale tobacco-smoke in the dining-room curtains next day. He talked well at dinner, talked better after dinner; and was equally ready to sing a good song in the drawing-room after that, to the accompaniment by Miss Lucy, to take a hand at long—and it was often very long—whist with deaf old granny.

Thus did John Jackson cultivate for many years the friendship of friends who had houses at the seaside: and when one morning it was found that, in spite of frequent re-invigorating of the inner and outer man, the quantity of ozone in Dull Court was really insufficient to support the cheery life of John Jackson, and that John Jackson had gone on a last, far-distant ramble, there was many a sad heart in the watering-places of England, in scarcely one of which were the face and jolly appearance of the man unknown.

Shade of John Jackson, I apostrophise thee to-night! With shame and confusion of face I penitently retract those many hard things I said of thee touching thy goings out and thy comings in between Saturdays and Mondays, and those long sojourns thou wert wont to make with thy friends who had houses at the seaside. Humbly I confess that, lacking thy *savoir faire*, thy *bonhomie*, thy kindly manners, thy winning ways with children, thy knack of friend-making, thy many social accomplishments, I have in jealous moments sneered at thy acts, set at naught thy counsels, and fished-up from the envious corners of my brain motives all unworthy, which I have assigned to you as inducements to your kindliness, and as explanations of your readiness to be all things to all men.

John Jackson, on this hot evening, in stuffy unozonised Dull Court, where the air is laden with heat and with the

unwholesome moisture steamed up from the kitchens of the tavern hard by yon darksome gateway, where the paint on the window-frames is blistered with the anger of the intemperate sun, and where the thick bindings of ponderous tomes turn upwards under the influence of the same ; where the very ink evaporates, as unwilling to remain bottled in vacation ; and where no human being who can help it comes ; I acknowledge the wisdom of thy counsel, and deplore the aspersions I have cast upon thee and upon it.

Lonely, very lonely, is Dull Court to-night. I am the sole occupant of chambers therein. 'All, all are gone, the old, familiar faces,' and on their doors, before which I present myself expecting, I find little labels, conveying to duns and others whom it may concern the interesting intelligence that Mr. — will be back in two months from an unspecified date.

Beyond the court I have not the courage to wander. The air is burnt up, the pavements are untrodden, the shutters of well-known rooms are closed and beginning to be encrusted with cobwebs ; there is not a friend or acquaintance in the place ; and silence, rarely broken, reigns supreme over one of the busiest haunts of men. The night is one of those which makes 'weird sounds of its own stillness,' from the far-off city comes up a hum of traffic, contrasting strangely with the lifelessness of all around ; and heavy upon the lazy air comes the boom of Big Ben, and the deliberate, vacation-like strokes of a hundred city clocks ; there is a murmur of activity from the river ; and ever and anon there jars upon the ear the clangour of brass bands, the shout of a pierman, the uneuphonious scream of an engine-whistle, the dull thud of steamboat-paddles striking the unwilling tide.

Within the courts silence and the crickets have it all to themselves ; within the chambers the supremacy of Momus is disputed only by the mice, who, regarding me as some unreal thing, as some 'false delusion, proceeding from their cheese-oppressed brain,' some phantom-man contrived only as a test of the steadiness of their courage, come out from wainscot and panel, from lumber-boxes and deed-chests, and run riot all over the floor. They know it is vacation-time ; they assign it to the class of violent improbabilities that I should be what I seem ; they are aware that I ought not to be there ; and they conclude that my half-dressed form, recumbent on three chairs, slipped as to its feet, bepiped and tobacco-smoked as to its mouth, and situated directly in front of the only window through which a

little street-disgusted air finds its way, is but a mockery, an unsubstantial thing with fear of which to scare young mice who should be asleep and are not, into the arms of the mousey Morpheus.

Unwilling to disturb them in their gambols, I muse and smoke on, and ‘with the incorporal air do hold discourse.’ No friends, no money! This is the text from which I preach to myself most eloquent sermons, explaining clearly enough to my own satisfaction how that it is incumbent on the world as a paramount duty to provide me both with money and friends. I descant grievingly upon the merits of friends who have been and are gone, upon the growing incapacity in myself to replace those friends with new; and I rise almost into eloquence as I enlarge to myself upon the theme of ‘that want of pence which vexeth public men.’

Why should Lord Nowork be cruising about in a yacht large enough to hold thirty as good as he, while I am unable to move hand or foot towards getting a sight of the water! Why should little Dodger, of the Southern Circuit, who works not half so hard as I do, and who of course has not a tithe of the great natural gifts I boast—why should he be enabled, simply because somebody chose to die and leave him a fortune, to go upon expeditions in vacations, the *éclat* of which goes far to make up for the differences aforesaid, while I am

‘Barr’d from delight by Fate’s untimely hand,
By wealthless lot, or pitiless command’?

Of course when I have gone far enough along this line of thought—one which has been travelled often enough, by the way, from the time ‘when Adam delv’d and Eve span’ up to the present moment—I come to the conclusion that the argument is capable of application downwards as well as upwards, and that according to it I might be called upon to share even my slender means with some one—say the lighter of yonder gas-lamp—blessed (?) with scantier means still. To avoid this lame and impotent conclusion, which it would never do to apply as the clergy invite us to apply their remarks, ‘practically to each one of ourselves,’ I follow the example of other politicians and draw ‘a hard and fast line’ at the place where the argument becomes inconvenient, and make a note in my memory that when I am in a position to advance the salutary proposal for a re-division of property, the proposal is to affect everybody above me in wealth, but none below me. The nimble mice break-in

upon my reveries, and show me that, at least in the mean time, my ideas are not considered democratic enough, for they walk off with the solitary piece of meat which was to have furnished my supper.

Be off, you vagabonds ! 'Tis no excuse that I have what you have not, and that I want it less than you do ! Be off, or I'll bring out the trap which was so fatal to your 'heads of houses' last winter !

'Put money in your purse !' Excellent advice, Iago ; fit to compare with that poor Jackson gave. But how to follow it ? I know that, following it, I can do as Lord Nowork does ; that I can be the more than rival of little Dodger of the Southern Circuit ; that I can bear the charge and carriage of a 'gentleman,' a class of which Sir Thomas Smith tells us 'they be good cheap in this realm ;' that I can go whithersoever I please, associate with whomsoever I like.

Have I not tried to put money in my purse ? Have I not risen early, and late taken rest, eating the bread of indigestibility, toiling at that immortal work which is to be a guide to the profession and a sure source of perennial income to me, only as yet the rewards come not and the publishers doubt and tarry ! Have I not, even here in Dull Court, since the last vacationer departed from it and left behind him the load of *ennui* and fatigue which is pressing me down—have I not striven to win the means of putting myself even with him ? But editors—a carping crew, I ween, be they—sniff at my manuscript, and detect, they say, a certain gloominess and deadness about it, begotten, they venture to suggest, of weariness and faggedness in the writer. They recommend, as the doctors do, change of air in order to the clarifying of one's wits ; and they withhold, as the doctors do also, the means wherewith to act upon their advice.

One editor I approached with an *ad captandum* offer to write for his magazine accounts of the various places I might visit, including a paper on the natural history of Pegwell Bay, a treatise on the dip of the various strata of the Scarborough population, and 'a succinct account of the architectural features of Beechy Head.' The man actually refused the offer ; and I would not expose my feelings to the injury of another refusal by offering the scheme elsewhere. There was a something in the expression of the editor's face—the gentleman was a stranger to me—which indicated a belief that I was trying to make fun of him.

There ought to be a philanthropic society for securing vacation outings to the weary ; and by the weary I mean, not those good folk who get tired with manual labour, and who get taken down to Epping Forest twice or thrice a summer in big vans, and are treated to dinner, and music, and ginger-beer, and knock-em-downs, and then brought back again to their work and their labour. Far be it from me to begrudge them their jaunt to the forest and back again, their day's pleasure, and their relaxation from daily manual toil ; but seeing they are provided for by philanthropic committees, with ever so many good fellows and ever so many nice young ladies upon them, I would confine the operations of the society to the relief of those who, like myself, are beyond the reach of such good fellows, and, alas ! beyond the reach of the nice young ladies also. We have a splendid case with which to come before the public—a case founded not only on the very first principles of charity, but on other claims to which the visitors to Epping Forest cannot pretend. Among us may be found the caterers for half the popular literary amusement that exists. At this very moment while I am sweltering in Dull Court, while Jones of the *Commentator*, Brown of the *Highflyer*, and Robinson of the *Comet*, are doing the like in their respective dens, bound hand and foot by that chill penury which does *not* repress their noble rage, the *dilettanti* at fifty watering-places are amusing themselves with the results of our lucubrations done in happier times. We have a claim on your gratitude, most noble public ; and we will thank you to acknowledge the same as speedily as possible.

Do not fear to hurt our feelings by the display of your charity. Send vans to our rooms, yes, with the name of your society painted upon them if you will ; make it a condition, if it so please you, that we wear a distinctive dress during the period we receive relief ; that we smoke none but the best bird's-eye, drink none other than purest Bass, and never get up before 10 A.M. ; make the recipients of your bounty as conspicuous as possible, we will come, and gladly come, and your beadsmen will ever pray. *Verbum sap.*

'You must come and see us some day,' says middle-aged Mrs. Watkins, for whom I draw dividends and do other little commissions, every time that she comes to my chambers or writes to acknowledge my remittances. 'With the greatest pleasure,' say I, and have said any time these five years ; but Mrs. Watkins has not sent a specific invitation, and I cannot dream of going without one. Why not, pray ? whispers the shade of John

Jackson. Mrs. Watkins is precisely one of those who would have been on his list. She has a pleasant house at Fairview, the means of making a guest exceedingly comfortable, and—ay, there's the rub, and perhaps the explanation of the delay in her invitation—'one fair daughter, and no more, the which she loveth passing well.'

I could not find any solution to the question propounded by John Jackson's ghost. I almost resolved I would take Mrs. Watkins at her word and present myself next day at Fairview, with the announcement that I had come to stop as per invitation, aged five years. The postman's knock on my door awoke all the echoes of Dull Court, and scared at least four mice into apoplectic fits behind the wainscot. I almost lacked energy to see who had written to me. Slowly I rose, strode my way to the door, and withdrew from the cumbrous letter-box a tiny envelope.

'You have so many times promised to spend a few days with us, that now I hope you will not refuse.'

Refuse, my dear lady! Here, come out, you portmanteau; appear, ye hat-box and carpet-bag; make yourself ready for an immediate move, O thou owner of the same! and by to-morrow at this time so contrive that thou mayest answer the generous-hearted Mrs. Watkins's note in person.

* * * * *

Fairview is a *very* nice place; Mrs. Watkins is a very nice person; and the one fair daughter and no more is all and more that the heart of man could wish for. I sketch for her, she plays on the piano to me; and Mrs. Watkins plays propriety in a way to which the most fastidious man could not take exception. What the end of it will be, I cannot say with certainty; but I hate the bare idea of Dull Court again, and think to dispose of my interest therein to anybody who likes to become a bidder. I have no wish whatever to stir away from Fairview, where I find plenty of material not only for a dozen articles, but for at least one love-story of thrilling interest. The result I shall be in a position to communicate next year; but my notion is, I have made the best use possible of John Jackson's advice, and shall not in future need to cultivate further the friendship of friends who have houses at the seaside.

RECOLLECTIONS OF PIC-NICS.

THE last pic-nic at which I 'assisted' was in its way of a very pleasant and even a memorable character. It is worth while to say a word or two on the locality. It was one of the most secluded and picturesque districts of the southern coast. There is a broad land-locked estuary, and from this estuary the sea ramifies widely up the country, in a way that recalls the dark fiords of Norway; in this direction and in that there are tidal rivers, and in another direction the water resembles a system and succession of lakes—sheets of gold in the sunset; and in another direction, as in the Scottish lakes, the sea wanders far away amid woods and mountains, and its ebbing and advancing waters lap the final tiny beach in some far inland nook. Now this pic-nic embraced partly a riding expedition, and partly a yachting excursion; and also our paths lay through woods and over abundant soft greensward. I felt obliged to the handsome boys and girls who made me join the party; for I am not young, and I am not eligible, and I possess the wholesome humility which such radical defects should impart. I have to reëcho the lyrical regret of old Barham of Ingoldsby fame,

*'Eheu fugaces, Postume, Postume,
Anni labuntur, lost to me, lost to me!'*

I trust I did not abuse the good-nature shown towards me. There was one very sumptuous little girl, pretty and dewy as a star, soft and gracious as a summer sunset, who purled out most musical prattle, who, I believe, would at any time favour me with a stroll or with a song. I carefully talked with her, while that handsome Lothario army man, not worth more than the well-turned boots he stood in (on the favourable hypothesis that they were paid for), was hovering around her like a hawk o'er a dove; but I surrendered her cheerfully to her well-mannered,

well-acred squire, the country gentleman who will be the county member. And, remembering pretty Bella, let me admonish all young ladies to try and be gracious and sweet-tempered, the proper disposition that suits the summer pic-nic—a disposition which even without beauty is so often successful, and with beauty is absolutely irresistible. I noticed, at the outset, with the eye of generalship, that the party was very ill-chaperoned. Poor Lady Green was utterly weak and commonplace, and so far from being able to exert management and influence—the dowagers will tell you that both are often really necessary at a picnic—would, at any difficulty, sink into a state of the feeblest nonentity. Mrs. Totteridge, on the other hand, would manage admirably till sunset, and if she could then bring her brood into covert, all would be well; but she would not encounter any evening breeze that might threaten rheumatism or lumbago. We had a glorious day and a magnificent feed; and then the little loves, who were obviously ignorant of the fact that they possessed digestive organs, commenced their playful terpsichorean preludes. Dancing is not in my line; and I stroll away with that worthy man and well-known historic character, Dr. Dryasdust, to look at some curious Roman remains that had lately been disinterred a few miles off. The music of voices lessened and grew still as we boated up the river, and soon we only heard the ripple of the stream and the gentle swaying of boughs. We worked away at the ruins, when I think I satisfactorily demonstrated the site of the old *atrium*; and, let it be recorded to the immortal honour of Dryasdust, that he had surreptitiously conveyed some bottles of claret into the boat, which, cooled in the stream, formed a truly refreshing beverage.

The shadows were gathering as we rejoined the party. Some ingenious wretch had discovered an adjacent barn, which had been extemporised into a ballroom. Tea was being handed about, and an intimation was conveyed to me that there would be supper in a few hours' time. But we found Mrs. Totteridge compassed about with wraps, and complaining of premonitory symptoms of lumbago. She immediately ordered her carriage, into which Dr. Dryasdust incontinently sneaked. Let me confess that I followed his example; for, alas! I am no longer young, and I begin dimly to perceive the advantage of regular hours. My last glance at Lady Green revealed her simpering, insipid, and somnolent. I got home, staying at a house which had furnished a considerable contingent to a party. I retired to rest, and soon in my dreams Dr. Dryasdust was dancing a reel

with Mrs. Totteridge over the Roman *atrium*, and standing on his head afterwards. I had omitted to close the shutters, and I was aroused, cheerful and refreshed, by the powerful rays of the morning sun. I quickly dressed, and was coming downstairs, when I heard a tumult of multitudinous voices in the garden. It was seven o'clock in the bright morning, and the pic-nic party was only just returning home. Some excuse was alleged on the ground that it was low water, and they could only get the yacht off with the tide. All the responsibility was of course attached to that helpless Lady Green, who was utterly crushed by seasickness, and unable to give any lucid account either of herself or of things in general. But since then I have heard astonishing accounts of the love-makings which went on in the charmed summer night, and various 'adventures which the liberal stars have winked at;' three several marriages are properly attributable to this particular pic-nic. Among the rest, my gracious little maiden became engaged to the right man, and threw over that Lothario, whom any chaperone except that feeble-minded Lady Green would condemn as bad style.

That pic-nic was very well in its way. Indeed, I have given it the place of honour. That little love-affair of sweet-natured Bella makes it a kind of landmark for me. But, O, my young friends, what pic-nics are those which came to pass when I was young! The girls are as pretty as ever, but not so stately now as they were then; and as for the men, the old cavalier traits and touches are each day becoming fainter and rarer. When the summer revellers had gone to their repose, I took my dip in the sea, and then strolled along the beach. I came shortly to a cave which I knew and loved well. In its recess I was sheltered from the scorching sun, and the sea-breeze blew towards me with a gentle violence. The water, even at the highest tide, would hardly come up to the first foot of ground within the cavern; but to those who did not know the place it would seem intercepted by the sea. There I sat down in secure loneliness and mused. First of all, doubtless, about the cavern and its belongings—the stalagmites and the stalactites, the osseous remains, the Celtic drift, the flint instruments, &c.; and speculated whether Adam ever really had a grandfather, who must have lived in such a cavern, and what sort of a grandfather he might be likely to be. And then my mind, by a natural association, wandered away to old pic-nics, forgotten long, but which now recurred with only too faithful recollection. Again old gardens bloomed; again the lilies and roses revived on now faded

cheeks ; again the corridors of old castles rang with merriment and music ; again we trod softly on the lone shrine of a dismantled abbey, or wandered in leafy woods, or sat down, as in this cavern, by the lone remote sea.

In the scheme and construction of a pic-nic the choice of a locality is of great importance. For there are those whom, like Hamlet, man delights not, nor woman either ; those who, like Barzillai, care not for the voice of singing men or singing women ; who have yet an educated and attuned sense of scenic loveliness, and can appreciate, with a mind stored with associations, every fragment of historical ruins. Looking back upon my pic-nics, some are conspicuous for personages and incidents ; and some, with a less chequered interest, for their locality. It is a lone sequestered glen, gradually narrowing to a rocky defile, and a waterfall makes its bold leap and shout at the further extremity, and not far off is the sleeping blue of a mountain-shadowed lake ; and it is not alone the voice of waters that we hear, but the songs of great poets, who have loved and frequented this scene ; men of pure hearts and almost inspired intellects seem to arise in mystic unison of melody. It is an ancient castle ; the keep crowns the crag ; the circumvallation of wall is still perfect ; still perfect are the gateway and portcullis : the long broad fosse is around it, where the peaceful cattle are now knee-deep in the summer grass. We mark the places where the beeves were roasted whole in the great kitchen ; the narrow apertures where the watchers watched for any coming lances glimmering through the cloud of dust ; the battlements, manned by the garrison to repulse the escalade ; the long corridors, the subterranean chambers, the hidden dungeon, the secret spring of water, which will enable the keep to hold out even if the inner court be taken. Here, we say, was the retiring-room of the ladies, whence they gazed upon the broad prospect from the mountains to the sea ; here the pleasance, where, in the summer afternoons of long ago, they tried feats of archery, or listened to the song or tale of the minstrel, or watched deeds of prowess among the knights. And now we tell how the castle held out for so many days or weeks against the rude cannon of our ancestors, and was only subdued when some traitor revealed the secret of the spring. Here, too, was the unfortunate earl or prince confined ; long years he was confined, and at last he severed the bars of his dungeon and emerged into the sunlight, but only to be cut down by the remorseless guards. Those of our pic-nic party who are familiar with all the pages of Sir Walter—and com-

mend me to those lads and maidens who, in these days of sensational literature, know and love their Scott!—will recall all manner of real and imaginary scenes for which the castle might form a stage. The scene is now an ancient abbey; and we have all lingered late, that we may see the moonlight play upon the buttresses and pillars, according to Sir Walter's fine notion. Many an ancient abbey has looked down upon our revels—rather frowningly perhaps, but not frowning too severely, and with even something of sadness in its impassive gaze. We try to summon up the vanished picture of the past: the Lord Abbot, the Sub-Prior, the Sacristan, and all the sacred train; the resounding music of the chapel choir, gladly heard afar by wandering pilgrim or belated traveller; the good cheer in the refectory; the holy penances in the cells; the crowd of poor or ailing people at the monastery-gate, relieved by hospitable hands, and cheered by godly counsel. And now the king's messengers approach the monastery, and the tramp of armed men is heard in the cloisters, and for the last time, amid tears and sobs, the holy brotherhood hear vespers in their stately choir, before they are driven away into a forgotten and heartless world, and rude hands are laid upon the holy vessels, and dismantle the soaring roof; and the unwilling rustics, who have lost their friends and gained a poor-law, bear away the sacred stones for any sordid purpose; and the hallowed site, with its fertile gardens and sunny meadows, low woods and whispering streams, are conferred on some fawning atheist courtier, or gambled away by a tyrant king at a throw of the dice. He is a happy man who can explain to pensive Jane, or imaginative Constance, something of the history and architecture; can trace out each compartment of the old religious house, and can be learned about pillars and arches, triforia and sedilia. Then again, it is the stately modern palace. A river runs through the lawn-like park, over which are arched the ornamental bridges, and the wide parterre is gorgeous with blooms, and the air heavy-laden with scents, and the vast conservatory is close by, down whose central aisle the Duchess regularly drives her four pet ponies; and there are flower-filled urns, and fountains and cascades, and ornamental waters, with their mimic buildings and miniature fleet; and within the palace is the corridor filled with lines of statues; the gallery, crowded with tiers of pictures; all that affluence and pride of modern life which English wealth and taste can bring together. Then again, once more, a gay water-party, we stand upon the margin of the summer sea, that is now

all smiles and dimples, about to launch forth to yonder fairy island, where the basaltic mural precipices make an impregnable fortress, save one inlet strewn with varied shells, on whose sands our keel may grate, where they point a hermit's ruined chapel, where the vast swarms of seafowl cover the rocks, where the lighthouse sheds illumination over the dangerous lee-shore; where again the dance and song and crowned goblets, until the westering sun bids us take to the boat, crowned with flags and flowers,

'Youth at the prow, and Pleasure at the helm,
Unheeding of the sweeping whirlwind's sway,
That hush'd in grim repose awaits its evening prey.'

These are recollections of some old pic-nics, where the localities possessed a beauty and interest of their own, independent of human companionship, and, indeed, possess an undying interest when associated with incidents and characters worthy of such associations. Ah! those old days of courting, in the glad pic-nic times, to which many an honest couple will look back as the very flush and flower of existence in the spring of life and hope! I think there is a freemasonry and honourable understanding at all pic-nics that the pairing lovers are not to be molested and intruded upon by third parties, but rather to be helped and aided by any chance kindnesses we may do them. Sometimes there are such happy and contented eyes that it is not difficult to guess that a favourable *éclaircissement* has come off in some 'bowery hollows,' and the world hears afterwards that matters were made up at such and such a pic-nic. The experienced will detect how matters stand in the happy silence, in the long drive homewards in the gloaming; or even obtain ocular evidence by spying out a clasped and unresisting hand. I am strongly of opinion, however, that on such charmed evenings the dowagers ought to keep their eyes to themselves, and allow for a little natural *abandon*. But sometimes there is a reverse side to this: the lady has been coy, and the stars unpropitious. I cannot forget how young De Burgh swore, and madly called for his horse one afternoon, and galloped off, refused or jilted, and never saw his lady-love again; and Laura looked preternaturally grave the whole evening, and a gloom settled upon all our party. As I have said something of the interest of scenery, let me say something of the human interest, which ranks still higher; and especially let me recall one pic-nic, signalised in a remarkable way, and in which I was not myself altogether unconcerned.

That was the memorable pic-nic in which Kate Russell eloped with young Lawrence. But there are always two sides to the view we may take of an elopement. It seems at the time very jolly to the lovers ; whether it really was so in the long issue is a very different matter ; but it was full of consternation to the badly-treated and terrified chaperones, who received on their luckless heads the full vials of parental wrath. It caused also considerable consternation among some very pretty girls, who were promptly interdicted by their mammas from attending any more pic-nics that season ; and, generally speaking, the glorious institution of the pic-nic was widely discredited among that set for a long time afterwards, and received a great blow and discouragement. It was very much the fault of the elderly Russells. They allowed young Lawrence to be as intimate as possible at their house, though they knew that he was only an idle law-student, with very problematical chances of getting on at the bar. And when, in the dusk of the autumn afternoon, a little before dinner-time, old Russell, coming home from his office, and letting himself in quietly by his latch-key, had ascended into the drawing-room, he could hardly believe his stolid eyes that they saw young Lawrence's arm carelessly flung round his daughter's neck, with other symptoms of their being on the most confidential terms. Old Russell was in a Government office—pretty high up the tree also—where, like any other donkey, he had worked mechanically and regularly at the mill, and certainly received abundant fodder in the way of pecuniary oats and hay. If there was one thing he most especially dreaded, it was a young man with uncertain prospects, and destitute of any permanent employment. What was his dismay, therefore, when a remote cousinship had brought to pass an amatory complication at his own home ! I certainly think that he failed to make the best of things. Nature intended young men to love and marry, because they are young men, and not because they happen to be clerks in Government offices. Though a long engagement may not, on *à priori* grounds, be desirable, yet, when the mischief is done, it is not a bad plan to try and make the best of it. Such an engagement will steady a fellow ; and if the young woman requires steadying, it will steady her as well. As a rule, even the most hopeless engagements, when maintained with honourable persistence, generally end in a fairly happy marriage. Now old Russell, having naturally a sordid and un-hopeful soul, interdicted the love-affair, and forbade Lawrence the house ; but what can an old man, with his time and thoughts

devoted to the public, do against a young man with his time and thoughts entirely devoted to his lady-love?

He continued to meet Kate very often in the neighbourhood of the Regent's Park. There are those blissful institutions the Zoological and the Botanical, which, cleverly managed, can prove to be very useful on occasions of emergency. With all the parental vigilance, it was not possible to prevent young Lawrence from turning up at some evening parties, and interchanging words, looks, and notes on staircase and balcony. At this conjuncture of affairs it so happened that Arthur Lawrence suddenly came into possession of a stray five hundred pounds. I feel bound to say, that he went, in a most honourable way, to old Russell, and tried to make the most of this sudden flush of affluence. The old gentleman ironically congratulated him, and inquired whether twenty pounds a year, which he pompously described as the 'approximate revenue to be derived from the capitalised sum,' would be sufficient to keep him in cab-hire. He bowed him out with a kind of grin, unpleasant to contemplate. Then young Lawrence boiled over with rage, and he declared he would marry the girl, and that his despised little fortune should help him to do it.

There was a pleasant pic-nic to come off in the pleasantest of Kentish woods. It was joy and luxury to leave the dusty London streets for those shaded, overarched lanes of sweet Kent. Colonel and Mrs. Brinckman gave the pic nic, and invited Miss Russell. Mr. Russell casually asked the Brinckmans if Mr. Arthur Lawrence, of the Temple, was going, and was informed that they were not even aware of the existence of such a young gentleman. Now I myself was to go to this pic-nic, and bring my friend Wreford with me. But Wreford did not turn up, as he had had a day's shooting offered him, and, showing himself a being unfit to live, preferred the shooting to the pic-nic. I happened casually to mention this to Lawrence, for the sake of vituperating Wreford, and I noticed that he brightened up immensely when I mentioned the Brinckmans and the pic-nic. He declared that a pic-nic was the *ne plus ultra* of human enjoyment, and asked if I could get him an invitation. He vaunted his prowess in the composition of lobster salad, and said that he should give himself the pleasure of purveying a salad and a few dozen of champagne to carry out the idea. He was evidently very flush of cash about this time, and insisted on this notion, although I gave very little countenance to it. I was very intimate with Mrs. Brinckman, the dearest of creatures, and wrote her a note,

to which I supposed that no answer would be necessary, stating that Wreford had flung me over, but that, relying on her kindness, I proposed to substitute in his place a certain Mr. Arthur Lawrence. Having dispatched my missive, I deserted my chambers for ten days and went down to Brighton; but if I had not left them I should have found an answer from dear Mrs. Brinckman, by return of post, saying that any friend of mine in the world would be perfectly welcome, with the solitary and unfortunate exception of Mr. Arthur Lawrence. But this important letter, for such it really was, lay unopened in my London chambers for nearly a fortnight. I returned to town, staying for the night at an hotel in Jermyn-street, where next day Lawrence picked me up, in a remarkably neat chaise and pair, which he insisted on providing, with his normal extravagance, as I considered. Gaily and pleasantly we rattled out of town, and soon emerged on the lovely Kentish landscape. My companion seemed in high spirits, and yet a little excited and nervous. Once or twice it seemed to me that he had something on his mind which he felt half-disposed to confide to me, and once he rather abruptly asked 'whether he could rely upon me?' But I do not care for confidences, especially from a man whom I did not really know very well, and merely answered that I was afraid I was not a very reliable kind of individual. We found no difficulty in finding our way to the rendezvous. There were some carriages and a small bucolic group gazing thereupon. I noticed that Mrs. Brinckman changed colour and looked a little surprised when I introduced Arthur Lawrence to her. 'Did you not get my note, Mr. Smith?' she quietly asked, with the sweetest of smiles, which nevertheless had some little meaning in it. 'No, Mrs. Brinckman,' I answered. 'Brighton was so tempting, that no consideration, except your party, could draw me from it, and I have not found time to go to my chambers yet. I hope it was nothing important.' 'O, nothing very particular,' answered my hostess. 'There is a little matter I will speak to you about by and by. But it will do at any time.'

Our dinner in the woods was glorious. The lobster salad, elaborated by Mr. Lawrence, and produced from his chaise, was perfection. The Brinckmans gave us champagne, but the champagne produced by Mr. Lawrence must have stood him, at least, in a hundred and twenty shillings a dozen. I do not know that the young ladies were much the wiser, for they chiefly consumed tarts and custards, and were satisfied with any wine that had sparkle and foam. Now we were to have tea by and by, and it

was voted it would be most charming to light a fire in the open air, and boil water, and to do things in a genuine Robinson-Crusoe fashion. Presently Mr. Lawrence suggested that the party had better disperse into the woods and gather sticks, to make a really good blaze. With great audacity he offered to indicate to Miss Russell a locality where probably fuel might be found in abundance. I noticed that Mrs. Brinckman observed him rather narrowly, and that she accompanied the young pair in their first stroll through the park. She could not, however, do that sort of thing the whole of the afternoon. Indeed her vigilant eye was wanted in one or two other directions. I recollect, especially, one young couple, who made a reappearance some hours later on, and with great composure proffered two small sticks and a handful of dry leaves as their contribution 'towards making the kettle boil.'

But Lawrence gently drew Kate Russell away into the wood, and penetrated still deeper and deeper into its recesses. I have reason to believe that there were some little love-passages between them, but Kate could hardly have been prepared for what was to come. For Arthur told her that he had some very pretty little things to show her, and she was to make her choice of one of them. Then a small jeweller's case was produced, velvety and filled up with much soft padding; whereupon Kate's taper fingers elicited a select assortment of wedding-rings. You may be sure that Kate called Arthur a silly boy, and also, in a sweet moment of reverie, was induced to make trial of the rings, and, as is usually the case, one of them fitted as perfectly as if made on purpose. I wonder if Kate noticed that all the other rings were returned to the case, but that this one was carefully laid aside and deposited in her hero's pocket-book. By and by Arthur asked her if she had any knowledge of law documents, and Kate candidly pleaded ignorance. Lawrence asked her if she would look at one of those wretched parchments among which his life was doomed to be passed at the Inner Temple. Kate, willing to amuse and be amused, said she would like nothing better, and a mystic document was produced, to which a huge seal was appended by a narrow parchment slip, and Kate played with this seal, regarding it in the light of a novel work of art. Then Lawrence insisted that Kate should peruse the document, which she unexpectedly found to be a warm personal greeting from a most reverend prelate to his well-beloved Arthur Lawrence and Katharine Russell. Then the colour mounted rapidly into Kate's face, and 'O, Arthur,' she cried, 'what is this—and what have

you done?' Arthur, with a good deal of apparent contrition, owned that he had actually been to Doctors' Commons and procured a marriage license on speculation. At this point I am given to believe that Kate certainly manifested some little resentment. 'Was she actually to believe,' she asked, 'that Mr. Lawrence had gone to a public office, and, without her knowledge or consent, had actually filled-in her name to a legal document?' But Arthur soothed her with caresses, and bewildered her mind with his sophistries. Had she not promised him, and was she going to deny it now, that she would really be his wife? and was he so greatly to blame if he had acted in simple and entire dependence upon her word? If she would act so ungenerously, he was willing to tear up the license into a thousand pieces. Kate ordered him to tear it up, but rather languidly, and not in that peremptory manner which might perhaps have insured obedience. But she cried a good deal notwithstanding, and gradually this little difficulty was got over. By this time Lawrence had brought her the shortest path through the wood where it abutted on another line of highway distinct from the London road; it appeared afterwards that he had carefully studied the locality. There his carriage and pair were in waiting for him, according to the directions which he had given. 'And now, Kate,' he said, 'jump into this carriage, and come off to be married.' Kate nearly fainted away. She was fairly overpowered. She had hardly any capacity of resistance left in her. It would not do, she foolishly thought, to have any altercation before the servants who had charge of the carriage. That passage of arms about the license had almost exhausted her. Lawrence had carried out the maxim *frappez fort et frappez vite*. Napoleon said that there was a momentous ten minutes in every battle which actually settled the result; and that ten minutes went against poor Kate, during which she was tempted to forgive her lover's unparalleled audacity in procuring the license. She was partly lifted into the carriage and driven off to a small station, where they caught the express to London. Having purchased a special license, which cost a good deal of money, the marriage could be celebrated almost anywhere or anyhow. Lawrence had arranged every detail with the utmost cleverness and forethought. He afterwards declared that the pic-nic, or something like it, was a necessary part of the arrangement, and that the champagne lunch, with its charming guests, was in reality the wedding breakfast.

I think it may be granted that the whole plan of this elopement was unusually bold and successful. But still I am not

prepared to say that Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence really had the best of things : I think she would have been happier if she had been given away by her father instead of by the beadle, in consideration of half-a-crown of beer-money. And I think the bride sadly missed the lace veil and the orange-blossoms and the bevy of bridesmaids. And this surreptitious breakfast, taken, in fact, under false colours, was not so good as the real thing, with the throng of rejoicing friends, the speeches and bumpers, the prayers, salutations, and ovation, and the old shoes thrown after the white-favoured horses. And that honeymoon at the seaside was, after all, a doubtful and perplexed season ; at home anxiety instead of peace, and, instead of congratulations and blessings from relations, angry reproaches and recriminations.

I need hardly say how terribly nervous we got at teatime, when Kate did not appear. It was speedily observed that that very amusing Lawrence did not turn up either ; and then a very natural solution suggested itself to the female mind, which was fully confirmed a little later by the arrival of a polite missive to Mrs. Brinckman, and another to myself, both of which Lawrence had thoughtfully composed the night before. Mrs. Brinckman had a great deal too much justice and kindness to be very angry with myself, who might be regarded as an innocent accomplice in the matter (although I found afterwards that some people of a suspicious turn of mind regarded me as a wilful accessory before the fact) ; but there was a total cessation of all friendly intercourse between themselves and the Russells. Of course I cut Lawrence ; but, equally of course, the cut was of no long continuance after he besought me to come and see Mrs. Lawrence at their lodgings in Pimlico. I thought the young lady looked as lovely as that day when she wandered through the Kentish woods. My further intercourse supplied me with further arguments against those doctrinaires who maintain the theory of elopements. That five hundred pounds, rather melted at the outset by an expensive marriage, underwent successive throes of dissolution. Not till it was well-nigh gone, and thoughts of a charcoal fire had passed through Lawrence's romantic brain, did the stony heart of the elderly Russell in any way relent. He then allowed the young pair a hundred a year. Lawrence is now a barrister, too poor to go circuit, doing a little Old Bailey and Sessions business, and making convulsive efforts to effect a standing in the Westminster Courts. You should see how wonderfully polite he is to the solicitors in criminal business—men to whom, at one time of the day, he would not have condescended

to speak—and how assiduously he tries to get hold of some of the crown prosecutions. They have children of their own now, which better enables them to take in all the bearings of such a case; and though I do not think that Mr. Lawrence regrets his marriage, I also do not think that he will ever advise his young Arthur, or that Mrs. Lawrence will ever advise her young Kate, to perpetrate an elopement.

Thus I mused in my sea-girt cavern over the old bygone pic-nics, especially this one, which was more momentous in its personal bearings than any other which I could recollect. To you, my friends, the pleasure of the pic-nic lies chiefly in the anticipation; but to others among us the charm is in the retrospect. I could quote Aristotle's interpretation of this feeling in his *Rhetoric*—and indeed his remarks would sound grand enough in Greek. I saunter homewards, with a vague sort of idea that I must put that story of Lawrence's on paper, and thinking that by this time the revellers of last night must have slept off their fatigue. I meet the charming Bella, with her tangled golden hair like a mermaid's, fresh from her bath in the sea, like an Aphrodité Anadyomené. And though she is to belong to that wealthy squire, she tells me, with laughing lips and eyes, of all the dissipation of the night before, whereat she professes to be greatly horrified. I leave her to set about concocting an article, and to pay a call on Dr. Dryasdust.

Now I hope the fine ethical aim of this paper will not be overlooked. It has a moral for parents, that they should be lenient, and for chaperones, that they should be vigilant; a moral to young men, not to be rash, and to young ladies, not to be weak; a moral to all, that when anticipations yield to recollections, they should be as pure and unalloyed and unselfish as may be. If the little loves approve of my moralising page,

‘Let it go with you,
And hear your music on the summer waters.’

WHAT 'CAME OFF' AT CODLINGHAM REGATTA.

It would be hard to find a pleasanter place to spend an idle hour on a midsummer afternoon than the slope of one of the cluster of low sandhills which end off the strip of barren land separating the channel of Rakeston harbour from the open sea. By the time that you have passed the pilot-house on the beach, and skated for two or three miles across the slippery mud flats, with an August sun overhead, you feel that you can lay your gun down among the bent, and throw yourself on your back with a clear conscience, and look straight up through your hands at the little troubled tern as they skim backwards and forwards above you. The very sea seems to go to sleep. It is deep water, quite up to the shingle bank ; but the lazy rollers run too gently on the beach to break noisily. The colours, like everything else, are subdued. The sky is paler, and has more rose madder mixed with its blue than it has elsewhere, and the sea is hardly a different shade of the same tint ; scarcely darker than the backs of the kittiwakes which float on it : or the long line of shingle which stretches away towards the three wooded hills and the purple cliffs of Codlingham, six miles away to the right. The dry bent-grass which covers the hills forms a colour-link between the pale yellow sand which half buries it everywhere, and the sky above. Rakeston itself can be seen a mile and a half off, with its double-towered church on the slopes above the town. A flag flies from the tallest tower at high tide, when there is water enough for the little coasting vessels which can come up to take the bar ; and the Thames at London Bridge does not look half so imposing as the channel at such times, though at low water there is no difficulty in wading across it a quarter of a mile above the sea. The whole air of the land above the town is remarkable, and in many respects not unlike some of the vine-

yards in the valley of the Rhone. Indeed, if a good light soil and extremes of heat and cold are, as they say, the chief requisites for grape-growing, the experiment might, I have often thought, be worth trying there.

The strawberries grown there are celebrated, and so seductive, that it generally becomes a serious thing to have to run a sixer in the second innings of a cricket match at Rakeston when the British Queens are on.

But when a long spell of hard weather has frozen up the ditches and ponds inland, and driven the wild fowl in from the open sea ; when the channel is half choked with floating blocks of ice, and the fields of saltwort and sea lavender above high-water mark are snowed over, and the cutting wind across the marsh through which the last mile of the road runs, gets at your marrow, through three flannel shirts and any number of greatcoats and rugs, then is the time to see Rakeston to perfection. The soft flats, as the tide leaves them, are alive with fowlers and whistling birds of twenty sorts. Immense flocks of knots and sandpipers wheel about in front, like dark clouds one moment, almost dazzling the next, as their white breasts and bellies flash into sight ; and geese and ducks keep passing up in long lines, or toss about out of shot in the black water.

Some years ago, Captain Henry Rowland, a smart young officer, and capital company, came down to Codlingham to take command of the coastguard. He had chosen the station himself as a good shelf for a year or two after his marriage ; and as smuggling was still not quite extinct thereabouts, expected to find enough work to keep himself going, and showed every intention not to let the men under him go to sleep if he could help it. One frosty morning in October, not very long after his arrival, he and I went over together to Rakeston ; and, leaving orders for Old Jockey West to be sent to meet us with his boat and some provender, started off over the muds to visit the Preventive Station, and see whether there were any birds to be shot.

Old Jockey, as he was always called, was about the best-known character in the place. He kept a punt, and big gun, and was always ready to attend shooting-parties with his boat, or lend a hand at loading vessels, or any other odd jobs about the harbour. He stood a good six foot two in his 'mesh boots,' and looked as strong as a steam-tug ; but appearances are deceitful ; and, according to his own pitiful account, he was a martyr to bilious attacks, which made him so weak, that, ' if a little lamb

ran agin him, it knocked him down' at times. He was a dead shot with his old rusty single barrel; and in a harmless way, without exception, the biggest liar I ever knew.

He was at the meeting-place before us, and saluted us as we came up with, 'H'ain't got overmuch sport to-day, gentlemen, I doubt; a'most too airy for a wery great sight o' fowl.'

'Captain Rowland kicked up an old mallard among the ditches,' I said, 'and I have got a couple of shanks and a plover. How are you? I have not seen you since I came back from Ireland. I had my big punt gun over there, and rare sport it was. Forty widgeon one shot, and twenty-six another! What do you think of that? Cuts out Rakeston, eh! Jockey?'

'Lawk bless yer, there ain't nothin' here now. It ain't the same place as it was afore these here meshes was drained; there was fowl enough then. I remember being down here once when I was a boy, arter some teal as was on a bit o' water over there among the sandhills. I got three on 'em, and was loading again, and had just put in the powder and was ramming it down, when I seed a string of fowl flying up the channel right straight for where I was a-squatting. I had not no time to shove in the shot; so I pulled off the cap off the ramrod and let fly just as they was coming on all of a line. Three couple and a half o' mallard was strung right through the head, and another was knocked over very badly bruised in the heye. By Gor, there wor a splash as they all on 'em tumbled into a pit! They splashed out such a lot o' water, that I might have got a'most a bushel of eels, only I hadn't nothin' to carry 'em away in. Lawk, there was a sight o' ducks in those times; that there was. Ah, them was the days for the poor folk. 'Bacca was wery cheap too hereabouts then. Grog too! and lace for the ladies, bless 'em!'

I forgot to say that, in his younger days, Jockey had been up before the magistrates more than once for smuggling; and though of late years he had managed to keep out of trouble, I believe he had never very materially changed his old creed, that if a man bought honestly with his own money and landed on his own responsibility, in his own boat, no one could reasonably blame him if his views on the question of free trade happened to be a trifle more advanced than those of her Majesty's government.

Knowing what I did of the old fellow, I was amused to see him look Rowland over, when he caught his name, in much the same way that a superannuated fox might be supposed to take stock of a new huntsman out for a Sunday walk through his pet cover. The inspection seemed to be satisfactory on the whole.

Jockey was unusually talkative at lunch, and when we lit our pipes drew the conversation on to smuggling generally.

‘Lawk! yes, sir. I have knowed sights of things brought ashore here right o’ the middle o’ the day, scores of times.’

‘How used they to manage it?’ asked Rowland, with an eye to business. ‘What were the coastguard up to?’

‘Coastguard! Lawk bless yer! they ain’t no good. One way was when there was a regatta, mayhap two or three boats would have a kind o’ a race right out to a wessel they knowed and back; and just as some on ’em was a rounding, there would be a sight o’ things hulled in, and back again all of a muck sweat, with ’em all stowed snug under a sail or summut, and run the boat right up on to the beach: preventive men, and gentlemen and ladies too, mayhap, looking on and screeching and hollering like mad; for them is almost allust the closest races, mayhap the captain hisself giving ’em summut to drink his health with—Preventive captains is allust regular gentlemen.’

‘I like your old friend Jockey,’ said Rowland, as we drove home. ‘He is quite a character in his way: he tells me he has known that boatrace dodge tried successfully often. It’s worth knowing.’

‘A regular old smuggler. The stories he was telling you were personal experiences, in all probability. By the bye, your Codlingham regatta is next week, isn’t it?’

‘Yes; on Tuesday. I wish you would come over to us for a couple of nights on Monday for it. Do, if you have not got anything better to do: you won’t mind a small room?’

I accepted his invitation, and we agreed to meet in the morning at the ‘Dun Cow,’ a public not far from Rakeston, and have another day on the sands.

When I got there, soon after the time fixed, Rowland was waiting for me, in a state of great excitement.

‘That’s all right,’ he said, as soon as we had shaken hands. ‘I am glad you have turned up, for I expect some fun to-morrow. You remember Old Jockey’s smuggling dodge. Well, from what I hear, I suspect they are going to try it on at the regatta. I am going to order all the men over from Rakeston quietly; so we will walk over to the preventive houses, if you don’t mind, first.’

The weather next morning was splendid. Codlingham looked so gay and picturesque, with flags flying everywhere, that one almost forgot the smells.

There was a fresh breeze blowing, and by one the beach was crowded with visitors. The coastguard was there in unusual

force. Captain Rowland was starter, and had always a sailor or two with him to help: and several other navy uniforms were dotted among the crowd not far away.

The programme began with swimming-races for men and boys; then came sailing and pair-oar matches, and—the great event of the day—a grand life-boat race, with three entries.

The match which had awakened Rowland's suspicions came next. Three boats, two belonging to Codlingham and one from Rakeston, were to sail round a twenty-foot boat, which had been lying all day a couple of miles out to sea, and to row back again. They were to be started from the top of the shingle-bank under the cliff, and the race won by the boat which was first in its place again. Each was to carry four men and a boy to steer.

'Now for the fun!' said Rowland, as the men stood in their places ready for a start.

It was evident that a bold attempt was to be made to land something; and I was specially commissioned to make all the use I could of my eyes. Certainly I thought I had never seen four men who looked more up to a bit of smuggling of any sort than the Rakeston crew. They were all young men, with the exception of one old white-haired fellow with one eye, which twinkled through its half-closed lids with the most comical expression of mixed fun and suspicion.

'My men know something of that old beggar,' whispered Rowland, as he passed me just before the start. 'Here, take my glass; I daren't use it myself. Now then, my men, are you ready?—one, two, three!'—bang! And off they all rattled across the shingle, amid tremendous excitement.

The two Codlingham boats knocked over an old woman, and fouled half way down to the sea; and the Rakeston men were well into their seats, with their sail hoisted, before either of the others were off the stones. They were leading, as nearly as I could see, by a good half-dozen lengths, when the boat they were to round was reached; but there, as it seemed, some mistake or other was made, for when the sails were lowered and the three could be distinguished again, the Rakeston boat was some way behind the others.

'Not badly done that,' said Rowland, putting down the glass which he had snatched from me just before the boats turned. 'Jockey shall have half-a-crown next time I come across him. Look out; we are to have a race of it!'

The Codlingham boats still led, and were rowing splendidly together, but did not seem to be making very much way, and

the Rakeston men gained on them at every stroke. Though as fully persuaded as Rowland himself that the race was only part of the old smuggling dodge Jockey had been telling us of a few days before, I found it impossible to help catching the general excitement, and shouted as loud as any one, as, almost at the same moment, the three boats grounded, and the steaming crews splashed into the shallow water, and, in less time far than it takes me to write it, were straining and panting up the shingle. The Rakeston men were first at the bottom of the last ridge, where one of them slipped on a rotten dogfish, and one of the Codlingham crews wrenched their boat past, and, amid such cheering as one does not often hear, won by a nose. There seemed to be a pretty general notion that something was up. The crowd closed in round the boats so thickly and quickly that I found myself shut out, and the broad-shouldered fishermen, over whose sou'-westers I had to peep at what was going on as best I could, were evidently in full enjoyment of some excellent joke or other.

'Capital race,' said Rowland. 'You Rakeston fellows lost too much time rounding, eh? Your boat seemed a trifle heavy in the bows, I thought, as she came in. Couldn't have lightened her, I suppose? Holloa! what have you got here under the sail? Nets, eh? Queer ballast that, isn't it? Here, Jones, come and lift this out.'

'Don't be too hard on us, Captain,' said the one-eyed scamp, in the most dolorous voice; 'poor wife and children!'

A roar of laughter followed, as the suspicious nets were lifted out by a sailor, and displayed—*nothing*. The whole thing was a sell, and the boat empty.

Poor Rowland, he was very sore about it. A good dinner, and a strong natural sense of the ridiculous, did a good deal towards restoring his equanimity; and, under the influence of a pipe in the garden, he was quite recovering, when a servant-girl came out to say that some one wished to see him. It was Jockey West, who was standing by a mysterious little keg, looking very serious. He took off his hat when he saw us.

'Servant, sir; servant, yer honour.'

'Nothing wrong, I hope,' said Rowland. 'Do you want me?'

'Yer honour hain't heard, then, I doubt.'

'Heard what? What is it?'

'Two boat-loads o' things brought ashore at Rakeston this arternoon, and gone right away! Most unfortunate, there weren't not a preventive-man about the place—all on 'em gone to Cod-

lingham. 'Bacca and brandy, mostly, I doubt. Two o' my boats'-loads.'

'*Your* boats? What! do you mean to say you let them have your boat?

'Tworn't my fault; you hain't no call to speak to me o' that manner. I comed to tell yer.'

'Well, well, go on, then; let us hear about it.'

'Well, sir, my boy' (Jockey's boy was about thirty, and a size larger than himself), 'my boy seed them a hailing, and rowed out to ax what they wanted; there was right a big boat; and blowed if they didn't tie his harms and his legs, and took two lots ashore afore they let him go.'

'Well, hang it all! did you see them?

'Seed 'em, in course I seed 'em, and spoke to 'em.'

'Then you will know them again?

'Lor, sir! I was that bilious that I couldn't see nothing but yaller and green. They was furriners, owdacious furriners, but my eyes swam that, that I couldn't make out no more.'

'Your son could tell them again, of course?'

'It's verry distressin', sir; they made him that drunk that he can't mind nothing about it. I says to him, You young war-mint! says I, told you not to go out—leastwise, I would have told you if I had happ'ed to ha' seed yer; but, Lawk, sir! he fears right of a muddle like. That's a long time since I ha' knowed such a sight o' things come in and no one to ax a question.'

'You said you spoke to them. What did they say?'

'One on 'em comed up with this here little keg, and said, "Here, old chap, send this to the Captain for his good lady, and say as how she'll find it particular calculated for cherry-brandey."'

'You confounded old scamp!' said Rowland. 'Go into the kitchen, and tell them to give you some supper, if you're not too bilious; and don't let me catch you out in a hurry, or you shall know it. I'll be even with you yet. Confounded old scoundrel! I shouldn't have thought I was fool enough to be done like that. I owe him one, anyhow. Come and have a cup of coffee.'

HOW KATE DISCOVERED AMERICA.

‘Do you know who discovered America?’ said Charlie Fraser to me.

Now this question was asked after dinner at the club; and, as Charlie is a wit, it was not unfair to suppose that, at such a time, such a question was only intended to lead up to some brilliant joke; so, instead of taking it out of his mouth by making a smart reply (which of course I could have done), I merely gave a commonplace answer—

‘Christopher Columbus, was it not?—or Vasco di Gama, or somebody of that sort?’

‘Well, so I always thought till to-day,’ said Charlie; ‘but I find that such a belief is only another fallacy to be added to those that are taught in popular geography.’

I was rather impatient at this long preface, and felt another and stronger temptation to make a smart answer (honestly, I could have been very smart this time), but I was determined to go through with the joke, if there was one; so I merely blew three rings of smoke (an accomplishment in which I excel), and waited.

‘Yes,’ resumed Charlie, ‘and what is more, I have a document to prove it. Take that home and read it.’ So saying, he handed me a letter and left me, in order, I fear, to go, according to his custom, to the Arlington, and play five-pound points at whist till the next morning.

I glanced through the letter, which was written in a lady’s handwriting, crossed and recrossed, at first somewhat languidly, but, as I got on, with increasing interest, until at last I became thoroughly absorbed in it, and was only roused by the waiter coming for the fourth time (after a deal of preliminary scowling) to tell me that the club was about to be closed. The facts the letter disclosed were so remarkable, that I think it only fair to

lay it before the public in full, that eminent geographers may have the opportunity of discussing it, and, if necessary, that the Government may fit-out an expedition for the investigation of the matter, and the verification of the extraordinary geographical discovery therein recorded.

‘On board the Iona, 6th October 1865.

‘DEAREST CHARLIE,—I am sure you have wondered at not receiving a letter from me for so long ; but when I tell you the astounding adventures that have befallen us, you will be glad that I am alive—and indeed all of us, though Nelly says she is quite certain that you will dine just as well, and, of course, at one of those dreadful clubs ; but of course you will give them all up when we are married ; and that all men are selfish, but you are not, I am quite certain. You know we have had a great party staying with us at Dun Beg. Two gentlemen came from the North, where they had been shooting, but I do not believe they shot anything, or else why did they not—but I will tell you all in order, because I know you like it, and I am getting quite business-like. One of the gentlemen is a friend of yours, Mr. Felix Fellowes, of whom you were so jealous because I danced five times with him at Lady Gore Jowse’s—so unreasonable of you ! And I am sure it was only because he dances well—though he is very nice ; and he can do other things than dance too, as we found when—but I will tell you that in order. The other was a Mr. Tom Ruffler. He talked a great deal, and told us a great many clever things he had done and said himself—though he never did or said anything particularly clever while with us, so that we all agreed that he must have read all his clever things in a book. And he knew everything ; and contradicted papa about botany, and wore red neckties and varnished boots, and smoked a pipe : but I think it made him ill, because nobody ever really saw him smoke it ; and he asked me if I knew a tobacconist in the village ; so I gave him some of those beautiful little cigars you sent me, and I think he liked them, because he smoked seven in one morning.

‘But I must not wander from our adventures. You must know that we had been living together in the house for a week without any fresh arrivals, and so we had all got tired of each other. We used to play at croquet, and that made us quite hate each other. Nelly would not speak to Mr. Fellowes because he once croquet’d her down the hill into the river, and would not go and fetch the ball or beg her pardon. And Mr. Ruffler talked

a great deal about wanting to "play at golf"—he called it "playing at links," and always wanted to know if the golf was not too damp for the ladies to walk on (he meant the turf, you know); but I am certain it was because he thought it a good joke, because he never really did play, and when he did, it was very badly, for he broke two of the clubs and lost a ball. And Jack's alive is very stupid, if you get knocked down every time, and never catch anybody. Missie began photography, and took us in groups in our riding-habits; but some of the chemicals got mixed up together, and the picture only came out once, and then we all had large feet, and nothing but white in our eyes, and Mr. Fellowes' neck was longer than his body, besides Missie making her hands quite black. We had a deal of music, but Mr. Ruffler pretended to despise it. He cannot understand anything but "Slap-bang" or a hornpipe, and actually laughed at me because I said I adored Mario—he called it Mariolatry. We danced reels every evening, of course; but my darling Viva got in the way one night, and Mr. Fellowes danced the double-shuffle on her; so we decided that it was too dangerous an amusement. Viva is now the loveliest pug you ever saw; her nose is blacker and more turned up than any I ever saw, and Mr. Fellowes says he could hold her up by her tail without taking the curl out of it; but I would not let him try it. However, after a time we got tired of all these amusements, and to kill time I tried to teach Mr. Ruffler to sing "*Comme à vingt ans*," but he would sing up in his head, and pretended to teach me how to pronounce French, so that failed. As a last resource, we asked papa to have the Water-Witch fitted out, and take us for a day's yachting among the islands. And he made a joke, and said it was the *water which* he did not like; but he promised to take us over to the island of Staffa, which you know is quite close to us here, to pass the day and explore the caves. So on Wednesday week last we all went on board the Water-Witch early in the morning. We were quite a large party. Besides Bunks (who was as obstinate as ever, and even more, as I think), and the sailors, there were papa, and Missie, and Nelly, and Miss Downie—and, do you know, Mr. Fellowes has made desperate love to her, and calls her Jemima, and we have all settled that they are going to be married. Missie took her photographic apparatus, and of course I took Viva, thinking the sea-air would do her good. Just as we were pushing off, we heard somebody crying out, "Ah, hi! Ah, hi!" and a figure rushed down to the beach. Mr. Ruffler said it was nothing but

a head of hair ; but it turned out to be Captain Dinochie. Mr. Ruffler said his hair would sink the ship ; but papa said it was a wig, and we could throw it overboard in case of danger, so he came on board ; but Mr. Ruffler behaved very badly, and pretended to think that his parting was disarranged, and offered to lend him a comb ; then he said that as we had taken the captain on board, he was bored, and should take him off (he says that is a joke too, but I can't see it), and began to pull his whiskers (though he has not got any, but as if he had), and to imitate the way the captain says good day.

'So we started to go to Staffa, which is just on the other side of Mull, and papa began to tell us about Dr. Johnson, who, it seems, had been there too, and who must have been a very selfish and disagreeable person. Shortly after starting, we sat down to luncheon and were very jolly, and had Bunks down to drink our healths. We asked him what he would like, and he said he would like some toddy, and should prefer "to make it inside," and he drank the whisky first, and then the water ; but Mr. Fellowes gave him whisky the second time too, and Bunks actually never found it out till he had drunk it all. Then Mr. Ruffler sang "*Le Postillon de Longjumeau*," but as it was in French, and he sang it very fast, nobody understood it, except when he sat astride on a chair and imitated the clacking of a whip, and shouted "*Houp-là ! houp-là !*" Nevertheless we all joined in the chorus,

'Ha ! ha ! ha ! qu'il était beau,
Le Postillon de Longjumeau ;'

until Bunks came down and asked us not to go on, because it would raise the wind. Papa sang a song too, about Paul Jones, a very good one, except that there was nothing in it but the chorus,

'You have heard of Paul Jones,
He was a rogue and a vagabones,
You have heard of Paul Jones, have you not ?'

But he sang it in so many different tones of voice that we thought it was a different Mr. Jones in every verse.

'So all went on delightfully for about an hour, when Bunks came down again, and said he didn't like the look of the weather.

"Why not?" asked papa.

"Well, there's just a lot of scratches and scrawls, and mare's

tails, and mackerel's backs just knocking about, and there's a dirty-looking bank out to the westward."

'Then papa said we had better go back, and they turned the ship round, but almost directly the sea became very rough, the wind began to blow a hurricane, and the rain came down in torrents. At first we laughed at it, and the captain told us how he had been shipwrecked coming from the Cape of Good Hope, and lived for four years on a desert island, and when they got home all the sailors' wives had married somebody else; upon which Mr. Ruffler said that if ever he married, he should go to the Cape and get shipwrecked too, which made me think of you and feel very unwell. (All this time the sea was getting rougher.) Then the ship gave a sudden lurch, and threw a grouse and a jam tart into Nelly's lap, besides upsetting all the whisky over Miss Downie's dress. We all got very much alarmed, though Mr. Ruffler tried to make fun of it, and said he believed Miss Downie had done it on purpose to get double allowance. None of us laughed, and I told him he ought to be ashamed of himself to joke at such a moment. Just then the ship gave another lurch, and poor Mr. Ruffler, who was hurt at what I said, turned very pale, and casting a reproachful glance at me, said he would go and look at the weather, and went on deck. Then we heard a dreadful crash, and a groan, which turned out to be the captain, who had fallen down among the crockery in the pantry; and when Mr. Fellowes went to him he would not get up, but said he would lie where he was and die like a soldier. You have no idea what a scene it was. The ship plunging and rolling dreadfully, every timber creaking, the chairs and plates falling about the cabin, and the wind howling through the rigging, so that one could not hear oneself speak. Jemima and Nelly and I became dreadfully ill, and had it not been for Missie, who kept up and cheered us, I am certain we should have died then and there. I cannot tell you how kind Mr. Fellowes was. He never for one moment thought of himself, but ran about all over the ship for us, brought rugs, cloaks, and cushions; put them on the cabin floor for us, and kept the lamp alight. I felt as great an admiration for him that moment as if he had been Mario himself.

'Papa had been on deck from the first, and so had Mr. Ruffler from the time he went to look at the weather. As Mr. Ruffler goes yachting every year, of course he knows all about it, and I wanted papa to ask him if there was much danger, but papa said he had been looking into the water ever since he had been on deck, was groaning, and would not answer. And that made us

more miserable, because we thought it must be very bad indeed. The most dreadful thing was, that papa said we were sailing away from the land because the wind was blowing towards it, and we were on a lee shore. We all prayed him, if he loved us, to turn round and take us home ; but he said it could not be done, and so did Bunks.

‘All night the hurricane continued. You may imagine that we could not sleep. We knew that we were going away from the land, and expected every moment that we should strike on our beam ends, and so spring a leak in them, and all go to the bottom. Towards morning I fell into a doze, and dreamt I was at the Opera. I thought it was the last act of the *Prophète*, where the palace falls in. I heard the crash, and awoke with a start, to learn that our mast had been broken in two by the wind. Captain Dinochie must have been dreaming too, for I heard him say, “Spare my life—I surrender.”

‘All was confusion. The morning had come, but the fog was thicker than ever ; besides which the hurricane had increased, and the ship being quite helpless, was driven before it as if it had been a feather on the water.

‘This was the 28th of September. None of us could move, and all day long we lay in the cabin quite unable to stir or even to talk, and expecting every moment to be our last. I thought of you, Charlie, and wondered what you were doing, and whether you were thinking of me at all. How I wished you were with us ! I felt that I could have faced death by your side ; but Nelly said it would have been no better, and that you would not care about it, though I am sure you would. And then I thought that all was for the best, and I would not have had you in danger for worlds ; besides, you are a bad sailor. About the middle of the day a great sea broke our boat to pieces. Mr. Ruffler came down to tell us, looking very pale, but we were too miserable to care about it. He said that the wind had changed to the east, that we had been driving due west by the compass ever since we started, and were getting into the broad Atlantic. Papa was very anxious about provisions, and said we had scarcely anything but some bacon on board ; but it made us ill to hear it spoken of, and we all agreed that we should not be able to eat anything for a week at least. The captain crawled out of the pantry in the afternoon : such a sight ! One of the lamps had fallen on him, and he was covered with oil. He was as white as a ghost ; his hair was out of curl, hanging down quite limp, and his whiskers were all crushed up into nothing, so that we scarcely

knew him. He took no notice of us, but called for somebody to come to him, and Missie actually had to help him across the cabin to the ladder, where he sat all day with his head in his hands. In the evening Mr. Fellowes lit a fire in the men's cabin, and made some hot whisky and water, which he made us take, and we all felt very grateful and tried to go to sleep.

'For three days we lay in the cabin quite prostrate without any incident to relieve the horror and monotony of our situation. On the third day we were too weak and ill to care for anything. We had eaten nothing but a biscuit or two, but when we were all, as it were, at the last gasp, Mr. Fellowes found some brandy, and made us drink it by saying it was sherry, which I am certain saved all our lives.

'*Oct. 2.*—The wind still continued, and the fog too. Mr. Ruffler was very ill-tempered, and said we should soon get to America if we went on at that rate; and he kept saying that he knew from the first that we were going to have bad weather from the eastward, though I am sure he never said so. Miss Downie was very ill indeed, and wrote a last farewell to her family, which Mr. Fellowes put in a bottle and threw overboard. She then kissed us all, and said she should die happy, but in the darkness she kissed the captain too by mistake, and that revived her a little: and so the day ended just as the day before did.

'*Oct. 3.*—This morning Mr. Fellowes insisted upon our going on deck, saying it would do us good, and we dragged ourselves up the ladder. Never shall I forget the sight. The mist was so thick that we could not see so far as the length of the ship. The sea was rolling mountains high, and the immense black waves, curling over with white foam at the top, were rushing after the ship, threatening every minute to sweep over it. The mast was quite gone, having been broken off by jibing over, as Bunks said; but a spar had been put up with a little sail upon it, and was bending almost double with every gust of the wind, which was howling in a most awful manner. Bunks was steering in order to keep the ship before the wind. It was too dreadful a sight for us, and we all went down again into the cabin; but I think the air had done us good, for we began to feel dreadfully hungry for the first time. We held a consultation, and found that all the provisions we had on board were a tin of wine biscuits, two jam tarts, part of a grouse pie, a haunch of venison, some bacon (the sailors had eaten most of it), two pâtés de foie gras, and some walnuts. Luckily there was

plenty of water, and a large quantity of whisky belonging to Bunks, besides some champagne and sherry, a dozen of seltzer-water, and a bottle of maraschino. Papa said we must all be put on rations ; he then made out a list of all the things, and divided them by twelve, which was the number of the people on board, including Bunks and the crew. I begged hard to have Viva put on the list, but it was of no use, and I resolved to share my food with her to the last biscuit. Then papa ordered all the provisions to be taken into the pantry to be taken care of. What was our horror to find the venison on the cabin floor, half gnawed away and covered with dust. Everybody said it was Viva who had done it, and Mr. Ruffler wanted to throw her overboard, but I declared that I would follow her, and so her dear life was spared. We then had our rations served out—three wine biscuits, some walnuts, and a small piece of grouse-pie each, with some sherry and water. My pie was nothing but the back of the grouse ; I could not eat it, and gave it to Nelly for two walnuts. The storm still continued, and we all lay down to sleep very miserable.

‘Oct. 1.—The first thing I saw this morning was Viva, who came out of the pantry licking her lips. Luckily nobody but me saw her. When we came to have our morning rations, it was found that all the rest of the grouse-pie was gone. Of course everybody blamed Viva ; but it was very unfair, for Captain Dinochie slept in the pantry, and was just as capable of eating it, I am sure. The loss of our pie made us all very low-spirited, so we ate all the rest of the bacon to keep our spirits up, and drank all the champagne. After that we began to take a brighter view of things, and Mr. Ruffler said that perhaps some ship might be drifting our way through the ‘set’ of the Gulf Stream, and then we might fall in with her. We put our heads out of the cabin one after the other, but could see nothing, for the mist was as thick as ever, and the storm, which had now lasted six days, not abated in the least ; besides the sleet and rain drove right in our faces, and some got down Miss Downie’s neck and gave her the most dreadful cold, so that she insisted on having some bottles of seltzer-water made hot to put to her feet. I cried a great deal, and so did Nelly, but Missie comforted us so much, and was in such good spirits, that we soon became almost reconciled to our fate. The captain never spoke a word the whole day, and did not come out of the pantry except for his rations. Mr. Ruffler said he was thinking of his hair ; but he himself was very disagreeable too, and declared that if we did not fall in with a ship,

he should insist on Viva being killed and cooked, to make up for the venison and grouse ; and he offered to cook her himself in the Chinese fashion.

‘Oct. 5.—This morning all the provisions left were the two pâtés de foie gras and the bottle of maraschino. We divided them, but felt very hungry after our meal and very thirsty, so that we finished all the water out of the tank. Our prospects were now, indeed, desperate. We had no food, and were still hundreds of miles from land, though Mr. Ruffler said we could not, at the rate we had been scudding, be very far from the coast of Newfoundland. Towards night, however, the mist cleared up somewhat, and the moon came out for a short time. We all went upon deck to see it, and it quite cheered us. Towards morning the sea seemed to go down, and we heard a great commotion on deck, and could distinguish the voice of Mr. Ruffler giving orders. We rushed up the ladder at once, and there beheld land ! How shall I describe our emotions ? I cried for joy. Nelly looked at the land through the telescope for ten minutes before she would believe it. Miss Downie came up too, and was so overcome, that, finding herself near Mr. Ruffler, she fainted away in his arms ; but he handed her over to Mr. Fellowes, who carried her into the cabin. Then the captain came up, and spoke for the first time. He said the land was exactly like Scotland, and that made us all laugh very much, because, as Mr. Ruffler said, we had been sailing directly away from Scotland for six days. Mr. Ruffler himself said that it must be some part of Newfoundland, probably Cape Race, where the steamers touch. Bunks said he warn’t no navigator much, but he thought he had been there afore. This made us laugh again, for we were in good spirits ; but Bunks got very angry, and would not speak any more.

‘By this time we had drifted towards the land, and, as we had no boat, Bunks steered the ship as well as he could towards a sandy cove. At last she struck on the sand, but still some distance from dry land, because she draws ten feet of water, and the shore was shelving. Mr. Ruffler volunteered to swim ashore with a rope, and, taking off his boots and coat, dived overboard very gracefully ; but he had forgotten to take enough rope, and he was stopped, suddenly, underneath the water, or, as Bunks said, ‘brought up with a round turn.’ We thought he would be drowned ; but he only said something very dreadful to Bunks, and then, when some more rope was let out, swam to the shore with it. A larger rope was then tied on to it, and he pulled that

ashore,—then another ; and a packing-case was so arranged as to run along it, by which, first, Miss Downie, and then all the rest of us were taken ashore. Missie, who always thinks of everything, brought with her some dry clothes for Mr. Ruffler, who dressed in a cave ; and we then all started to explore the country. Mr. Fellowes had brought the gun which was given to Mr. Ruffler, in case we might find any game, which, he said, was probable. And we had not gone very far before a number of strange birds, very like grouse, rose up and flew away. Mr. Ruffler fired twice at them, but missed, and said they were too far off. Then we came to some more, and he missed them too, though they were very near. Papa said it was wasting powder, and took the gun himself, and shot the next bird we saw. We all settled that Mr. Ruffler could not shoot, though he said he had killed a large number of deer in Scotland. We walked on through a pine-wood and across some stuff just like the heather in the Highlands, which Mr. Ruffler said always grows in those latitudes—for he told us we were in the same latitude as at home. Suddenly, on arriving at the top of a hill, we came to the sea again and found that we were, in fact, not on the mainland at all, but on an island. All our hopes were overthrown in an instant. We looked at each other in blank despair, and slowly walked down to the shore, with a vague wish to be nearer the mainland. Mr. Ruffler said he was quite certain that the island was not marked upon any chart, and that we should have to report its discovery to the Admiralty ; and he resolved to take an observation of its latitude from the highest point. He left us at once to go back to the ship, in order to get a sextant and an almanac and materials for a tent ; and we all sat down in silence, looking at the land we could not reach. Mr. Fellowes and Missie got together some dry wood and lit a fire, which cheered us a little ; but our joy was of short duration, for Mr. Ruffler came back suddenly, and, in an agitated voice, told us that the ship had disappeared. Even Bunks had deserted us ; and we were now left perfectly destitute and helpless on a desert island. We held a council. The captain was quite violent, and said it all came of going to sea with a parcel of women. Mr. Ruffler could suggest nothing, except to cook the bird papa had shot. The only persons who seemed to be able to do anything were Missie, Mr. Fellowes, and papa, who made a kind of shelter for us with branches of trees.

‘But our deliverance was nearer at hand than we imagined. Papa was looking over the sea, and suddenly started up and turned pale. We followed his eye, and what was our delight to

see the smoke of a steamer plainly visible on the horizon? Then came an hour of dreadful excitement—hopes and fears chasing each other, and every minute seeming an age. We tied a shawl on a long branch and waved it frantically to and fro. We piled all the wood we could find on our fire. We shouted till we were hoarse, and fired off our last charge of powder to attract attention. At first the steamer held on her course and seemed about to pass the island; but suddenly she stopped, turned, and came straight towards us. After that I remember nothing, till I found myself lying in a comfortable cabin, the furniture of which was marked “Iona.” The revulsion of joy and gratitude for our miraculous deliverance were almost too much for me. I felt that unless I did something I should go mad; and I resolved to sit down and write an account of our dangers and sufferings to you, dear Charlie, who, I know, are more interested than anybody in everything that concerns me. I have done. I shall send this to England by the first opportunity, and shall count the miles that lie between us, and the moments that pass before I see you once more.

‘Your own loving

‘KATE.

‘P.S.—Mr. Ruffler has just come down. He says we have got the yacht in tow; that there was a “local attraction” which made the compass always point to the west, and that we had been in a circular storm. It is a mercy we came across the Atlantic as we did.

‘P.P.S.—Mr. Ruffler says that we were not in America at all, but on one of the small Hebrides near Mull, and that this is a steamer which runs from Inverness to Cronan, and that we shall be at Dun Beg this afternoon. I daresay he thinks that a very clever joke, but of course I do not believe it. And he says he shall write a tale about it; so if ever you meet one, don’t you believe that either.’

GOING OUT OF TOWN.

EVERYBODY must go out of town. The only question asked about the middle of July is, when and where you are going: for, the idea of not going at all it were an impertinence to hint to you, and more than your respectability is worth for one moment to admit. There is plenty to remind you: queer loads of family luggage, always with baths; bundles, fishing-rods, and make-shift packages of all kinds are ever driving by your door, as of people going; long ladders, whitewash, and symptoms of a general turn-out, and long arrears of cleaning, speak of persons gone. Add to this, the parks are grown monotonous; all the fashionables have grown quite common; the pavement is hot, and the trees in the squares quite dusty; and even Nature looks shabby, and the flowers in the balconies can keep up false appearances no longer.

All this causes a sensation of being left in the lurch, and all the more dull because others are making holiday. Every newspaper is full of advertisements, most tempting, till you have been so deluded as to spend time and money upon the representation, of charming places to go to—summer paradises by description, but very dustholes in fact. The country, you think, must be shady, cool, and refreshing; and you find a place dark and fusty, with plenty of the heat, but little indeed of the air of summer. ‘This will never do,’ you say; ‘London is cool to this: what an imposition! But, then, how can I believe advertisements, or how find any house without?’

‘Then I understand, sir, you want,’ says a house-agent, ‘a good family-house, price moderate, near a station, on the banks of the Thames—sloping lawn, with boating and fishing. Why, all London want that, sir; and as to price, City people don’t stand about a ten-pound note—only once a year—pay for their whistle, all of them.’

Whereupon you look further down the list. ‘Here, sir,’ he

said to us ; ‘ this house the Rev. — wants to let : he used to give his house for a curate—a substitute for six weeks ; but the last had the scarlet fever in the house. Quite safe by this time, sir ; for a whole year since, and no one caught it. Or, stay, here is another house quite safe—but you have children, did you not say, sir?—very sorry ; he writes “ no children ” in his letter ; and I am to be on my guard against convalescents. But then this is the very thing—good house, well-stocked garden, and use of a cow, &c. ; price only four guineas a week.’

‘ But what advantages ?’

‘ Why, you don’t pay for advantages. Situation retired—but you don’t leave London for society, you know, sir—Salisbury Plain ; easy walk to Stonehenge.’

I soon found that we must extend our distance, raise our price, and limit our desires. All the requisites on which we had set our mind perhaps never yet had met together ; and as Uncle Robert proposed to join, and the girls knew he would pay for lots of treats, we at last found boating and fishing, or what was called such, with a railway near, with a lawn for croquet, and a field for archery. Indeed it was quite a relief to find so much together, coming just at the time we despaired of finding any house at all.

Uncle Robert became quite public-spirited : he saw advertised ‘ a pony, harness, and basket-carriage all complete, the property of a lady, who would accept moderate terms of a kind master.’ This he said he could buy and sell again—a cheap way of hiring—and we should have fine fun about the lanes.

We were now all in high spirits ; we should be so ‘ jolly,’ and so much enjoy a little rational country recreation. The house was to be all cleaned up and ready for us : but the day we arrived there was a gate wide open, the gardener had gone off to the public-house, a great litter of straw proclaimed that we had almost trodden on the heels of the departing tenants. The one maid left in the house looked much out of heart, and yet more out of temper. She was intrusted with the inventory, assisted by a clerk in the village ; and going over the inventory, when too old to coincide with later cracks, chips, and deficiencies, is no very satisfactory operation after a journey ; though meanwhile the boys began to put to their fishing-rods, and our girls began to set their croquet ; for all young people think, if they only take care of their own impulsive selves and amusements, that everything else—with the help of papa and mamma—will of course go right of itself.

Luckily we had brought a basket of cold pie and chickens, or we should have gone hungry to bed that night. We were four miles from the town ; and ‘ Please, sir, how about going to market ? Master used to be obliged to keep a tax-cart on purpose ;’—the reason master was so long in letting this out-of-the-way and most inconvenient place. Then there was only one farmer—and he very grumpy and independent—who would sell the house milk ; but the milk ‘ he would not sell anybody who did not also take his butter,—such stuff ! one would think he made it bad on purpose.’

‘ Then how did your master manage ?’

‘ O, master kept a cow ; but the cow isn’t in your rent ; the last family used it so bad—they were for everlasting a milking of it.’

For the meat, there was the village butcher ; but most people sent to the town. Here was one use for the basket carriage, certainly ! But I began to consider that my wife had promised herself a little holiday from the tedious severities of housekeeping ; and now her difficulties were likely to keep her domestic economies at full stretch ; and—worse and worse !—she said she apprehended quite a mutiny among the servants : they said they never saw such an outlandish place, and had they known what barn-door savages the people were, they would never have come.

Our troubles seemed serious ; for, my wife and I are bad travellers ; and, if we have a weakness, it is about a clean house and no fusty smells. Must I confess that our first week was a week of soap and soda, of charwomen and scrubbing-brushes ? and two large crates of kitchen and other articles fit to use we were obliged to send for to our house in town.

Meanwhile Uncle Robert, who never liked to acknowledge a bad bargain, used to come home very hot, after flogging ‘ that brute of a pony !’ After those drives we used to tell him, as he looked very savage and out of temper, that he was a very bad personation of ‘ the kind master’ specified in that very tempting advertisement.

However, by the end of the week—though this first week went very unlike the healthful holiday and recreation we came for—we had settled down and were ready to look about ourselves in quest of all the pleasure and rural felicity that we had set our minds upon.

How about the boating ? Why, six miles down the river lived a man who let out boats : but mamma heard there had been an accident, which made her nervous, as the boys could

not swim. However, I thought it would be foolish not to have a boat, now that we had paid higher rent for being near the river; so Uncle Robert flogged Gyp—so we called the pony, declaring it was stolen by Gipsies, and would be claimed, to uncle's great confusion—he flogged Gyp over to the ferry-house; and a boat was announced as at the bottom of our washer-woman's garden, and ready at command by the end of the first week. But even then we were three-quarters of a mile from the said boat, and that was as far as we cared to walk; and what with rain and leakage the boat was never quite ready, and always dirty from some one who had used it on the sly, when we reached it. Then those horrid locks were in the way, and only a mile from one to the other; and such a stream! we were—that is, Uncle Robert and I were (as the boys were not strong enough to do much good)—an hour rowing one way, and not ten minutes floating down the other; so like the rest of life, in which we have our labouring by the hour, but our pleasures doled out by the minute; and we came in so hot, we were afraid of rheumatism—and this was the first and the last of our amateur watering. True, I did boast of having been a good rower at College; but times are altered; for now I leaked at every pore, and blew like a porpoise. So we said that we would put the rowing off on the gardener, and a man he said he could find in the village; but, of course, the man was scarcely ever in the way when we were in the mood for a water-party; so we did not use the boat six times in all—and never really enjoyed it once.

Nature designed man for business, not for pleasure; for taking his part in the game of life with his fellow-creatures, and not for being taken up with himself alone for many weeks together. So, true to this scheme of Providence, two months proves to be a very long time for our own private and solitary gratification alone. The choice morsels and dainties of life depend upon your zest for them; and you can no more make pleasant days than nice dinners follow each other, without doing something for an appetite.

What was to be done? Croquet, with no young men, and pretty girls to flirt with; no gathering of their young mothers, for men like myself to lounge with on the lawn—for there is a sort of post-marital flirting for which we never grow too old—Croquet for its own sake, like dancing for its own sake, is absurd, of course; so the balls and mallets lay idle in the summer-house; and, after I had almost broken my shins over the arches, the croquet was as dead a letter almost as the boats.

But the fishing? Where there is a river, we imagine there must be fishing; but not necessarily the fishing that catches anything. We had been to Farlow's shop, and bought all sorts of ingenious baits—the spoon-bait included; though it only served as an interminable subject of Uncle Robert's puns, who said the fish would take it for a mirror, and see their noses in it; and they were the *spoons* who believed otherwise. Only, the water at one time was too low; at another, too high. Without a boat, and skilful spinning and boating together, under the weirs and in the mill-stream, you would never find yourself in the same parish with an old Thames trout. For the pike it was too early; and for all other fish—save a few gudgeons, and they very scarce—it was quite the wrong place. In short, we had yet to learn that whoever stows fishing-rods and baskets among his luggage for the two hottest summer months, virtually announces to every true Waltonian, that he knows very little about the matter.

Fortunately, it took us nearly five weeks to find this out—or, as Uncle Robert said, 'to prove an *alibi*' for the fish wherever we put in our line; so we had the pleasures of hope all the time. Certainly there must be good fishing, because there was here 'the Fishery Inn,' and 'Parties accommodated with punts, baits, and expert fishermen'—all supposed to be of sufficient attraction to be advertised at all the tackle-shops in town. There was also most conspicuous in the passage of the said Fishery Inn, an eighteen-pound pike in a glass case: and every man in the village told you of Squire A., or of Master Thomas B., who had done wonders. Indeed, the town-people stood up most stoutly for the pretensions of their water; and one day, when I rather depreciated the place as a great fishing resort, the landlady said, 'I suspect, sir, you are one of those gentlemen who are not very cute about catching of them.'

'And had you no one to speak to all this time?'

'My sympathetic friend, you shall hear.—For the first ten days, walking down to the post and there conning over the *Times*, was our chief resort. But there we scraped acquaintance with the parson—or rather the parson with us—for one of his parishioners "the most deserving,"—which means one who keeps off the poor-rates—had lost a pig; and since every pig-keeper calculates that no pig, of course, has any business to die till the proper time for taking his bacon degree, this was a great disappointment; so the parson came round for a subscription. We could not decently refuse a fair contingent, and of course we had

a little gossip in the way of discount ; but our ideas and topics had little in common. When he met me, he bored me about church questions, and the only one I at all understood was about shortening the services, as soon as it could be done constitutionally, and shortening the sermons without more delay : so we were sorry companions at the best.

‘ All this time it was not constant sunshine. We were shut up in the house by two very wet days, and the beautiful trees they boast of in a country-house we found could look very dank and dripping in bad weather. Nature’s beauties are sublime, no doubt : but you can’t look at one set of trees for ever ; and I am sure that a cabstand before my window all these two days would have been a sensible relief.

‘ But, after ten days, Aunt Betty, hearing we had a spare room, came for change of air, and especially for the good of her nerves—poor blind mortals that we are!—for little did these nerves know what were in store for them. The first proposal was a morning drive at walking pace with Uncle Robert,—“But was the pony steady?” Steady, indeed ! we all laughed at the idea—I had driven the brute, and said there wasn’t a kick belonging to it—you might as well flog a rhinoceros, or expect any runaway adventure from a cow ! But one day the pony looked to me more lively. I saw a shake of the head, and that kind of look-round in the stall, which made me think that the corn was improving him ; and, as our friends the Wakes proved to have found out-of-town quarters, about seven miles off, my wife and I, with Robert and Aunt Betty, agreed to start in the basket-carriage, to spend the afternoon with them.

‘ As soon as I had seated myself with my back to the horse, feeling the dangerous nearness of my head to the heels of a kicker, I expressed some natural hopes and fears to Robert, which he answered only with a laugh at the bare suggestion of the thing ; but, before we had gone three hundred yards, the pony seemed quite another animal, and a very vicious animal too. I jumped up in a hurry—his heels came flashing just where my head had been—crack, crack, crack was the sound, as he was evidently kicking to kick himself free. Robert was at too long a pull for the reins to be of any use. I staggered out, and fell with one foot under the wheel ; Robert was shot, like a sack, into the ditch ; my wife jumped into my arms—for, luckily, I was hobbling up in an instant ; but poor Aunt Betty was thrown bleeding on the gravel, while the pony, with the trap, went furiously kicking down the road.

‘This adventure made a variety, at all events, and that was worth something. The doctor—who proved a pleasant fellow, and something of a philosopher too—said that Aunt Betty was not very bad; whereupon Uncle Robert, who always makes the best of everything, proceeded to maintain that there was nothing like a good shaking to do some people good; and while Betty was employed about plastering-up her elbows she would forget all about her nerves. This theory the doctor did not use many words to qualify: for part of a doctor’s business is to indulge all the family in a good talk, and, to say the truth, at this particular time, we had as much talking-power wanting vent as we ever had in our lives. However, Aunt Betty was the subject of kind inquiries for a week from the ladies of a neighbouring family, who called with most sympathetic attention; so we began to feel a little more at home. The “safe and quiet pony” proved, on inquiry, to have been sold as an inveterate kicker—though kickers do not always begin their old pranks till they are used to a new place.

‘From the doctor we learnt a little of the locality. “Out-of-towners” (I learnt that word from him), he said, “have been quite a study to me for years past: they are a class of patients by whom I do a good deal of business in some seasons, and if they stayed a little longer, I should do more still in another way.”

“How so, doctor?”

“Why, they come down with one set of complaints, and if they only remained long enough, would, most of them, set up another. They come down here—the younger ones used up by the London season, and the fathers and mothers by the dinner-parties. There’s Mrs. Whitehard of Tyburnia—she declared to me she had been living on ice-puddings, sweetbreads, and side-dishes for eight weeks together.”

“But what complaints are people likely to catch here?”

“Why, compare your life, sir, these last three weeks, with your life in London. There, you say, you eat a cheerful breakfast, are off to the City—have no time, or care either, for more than a sandwich, or what nature requires, at midday, and come home to eat your dinner with a hearty appetite. Death, in the old story, could not catch the Cambridge carrier while on the jog, but he died the first idle day. Very true to nature that story is; and you, sir, what is your way of living just now?”

“I plead guilty; I am nibbling at the fruit at all hours; I am smoking from sheer idleness; and looking forward to luncheon for something to do.”

"Yes, that's the way idle men dig their graves with their teeth—men forget they can eat themselves to death as well as drink themselves. But as to your mind, sir? Are you not now fidgeted by little things as much as you used to be with great? Which is more trying to your constitution, do you think, 'to be eaten up by rust,' or 'scoured to pieces by perpetual motion'?"

"But what are you driving at, doctor? Is all this out-of-towning a physical mistake? Had a City man better go on work, work, work all the year round?"

"Certainly not. But you were complaining of the place being dull and stupid. The truth is, the best place for a fortnight is the worst possible place for a month. I have looked on and watched you sauntering to the post-office, gazing at the geese upon the common, and looking unutterable things at the lazy-pacing minutes on your watch. Yours, my dear sir, is the old mistake: people come down here after pleasure; but it is the very nature of pleasure to come after us, when we find it at all; and you out-of-towners want such an unconscionable quantity of pleasure to keep you going—with nothing else—as long as your rent is running out."

"I was soon persuaded of the propriety of finding some little business worth running up to London for, so as to break the monotony. But though I was "within sound of the railway," I was six miles from a station—there was another cheat in the advertisement.

"But the children," I said; "doctor, what will they do?"

"O, leave them alone. Nature is kinder and more considerate of children a great deal. Life is new to them. The parson's children will suit them, though I suppose the parson himself does not particularly well suit you."

"The doctor soon after remarked, "Letting houses in the season has become quite a business in this part of the country ever since our railway was made; and if it were not for the worry people had with their servants, or some little ailments to consult me about—the week it takes to get to rights, and the other week it takes to prepare for breaking up, disputing about the breakages and the inventory, and otherwise squabbling with the landlord, as well as directions for reopening their own house in town—without all this, bless me! people could never stand two months of it. To pass many days and weeks together all smooth and all pleasure, with no emphasis at all on the prosy sentence of life—this would be, like a cake all plums, too sickening to enjoy. So I always observe, that when men cannot

find themselves anything to do, the course of this world finds something for them. For while you can only avoid downright insipidity—that vacuum by nature most abhorred—I consider a few plagues as the next greatest blessing to real pleasures. The end of it is, that the said out-of-towning answers its purpose. Certainly, it is always very different from what people promise themselves; but isn't all life the same, chapter after chapter, from the cradle to the grave? And people are generally very glad to get back to home-comforts and their usual employments; and next year another set fill the same houses, and with much the same complaints; for it is very rarely we ever see the same party twice—not that they are quite so certain to better themselves elsewhere, only they have sounded the depths of this, and they could hardly practise the same imposition upon themselves, however sanguine, at another out-of-towning, unless they tried it on at some other boating, fishing, or otherwise tempting situation.”

Here was the philosophy of the whole matter. My experience, season after season, has completely coincided with the views of my observing friend; and I yet farther agree with him that while a man can keep on going pretty comfortably in this life, he need not be particular about being wiser than other people, or trouble himself too curiously about the why or the wherefore of those customary vagaries—perhaps the best, after all, of which circumstances admit—by which we all try to be happy the best way we can.

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

CHAPTER I.

‘I NEVER saw such rain in my life.’

‘My dear, it always rains at Genoa.’

‘Then why does “Murray” say that Genoa is a dry place, with sharp cutting winds?’

‘My dear, “Murray” makes a mistake. I have been here—let me see—six times; and every time it has been just like this—close muggy weather, and raining warm water.’

‘I suppose it is the time of the year?’

‘October, yes; I have always been here in October, certainly, on the way to Rome; but if a place were ever dry and cold, one would fancy it would be just in October. I can’t say, though, that I ever saw it pelt as it does now: it is more like Roman rain.’

‘A nice prospect for the Magra!’

‘That odious Magra! How people can say that there is a road from Genoa to Pisa, when there is that thing right across the middle of it, I cannot imagine!’

Such was the dialogue which took place between Mrs. Leslie and her daughter Mary, as they waited the summons to the table-d’hôte in their marble-floored apartment at the Hôtel de la Croix de Malte at Genoa. Mary was in rather delicate health, and her mother was taking her to Rome for the winter in the hope of bringing some roses into her cheeks. Not that there was anything seriously the matter, but her lack of bloom was mortifying to maternal vanity. ‘Don’t talk of being pale, my dear,’ Mrs. Leslie used to say; ‘paleness is one thing, and sallowness is another. I was a pale girl myself; but as to you, you look like a bit of waxwork fifty years old. You are never fit to be seen except by candlelight.’ She need not have been

uneasy: many a rosy-cheeked damsel was thrown altogether into the shade by her pale daughter.

‘Blanche, are you ready?’ said Mary, knocking at the door of an inner room. ‘Well, I must say,’ as Blanche made her appearance, ‘that Annette has turned you out in good style; you don’t look as if you had spent great part of yesterday on the top of Mont Cenis.’

Blanche was not Mrs. Leslie’s daughter, though her name was also Leslie, but her niece, and the two cousins were the closest of friends; very much alike in spirit and animation, but in appearance such a contrast, that each appeared to peculiar advantage in the presence of the other. Blanche was very tall, with a commanding sweep of figure, while Mary was rather square and substantial; Blanche had a complexion of lilies and roses, and a profusion of soft sunny-brown hair, whose natural ringlets could scarcely be controlled by the plaitings and twistings which fashion required; but all this, though excessively pretty, in no way interfered with the charm of Mary’s fine dark eyes, and beautifully-moulded head, on which the black hair, braided as closely as possible, shone glossy and smooth as velvet. In short, they would have made a perfect tableau as Rosalind and Celia.

Blanche had been considerably spoilt by her dear mamma, who had been left very young a widow with this only child, but who, happily perhaps, had died before the spoiling had gone seriously deep, and had left her daughter, a beauty and an heiress of thirteen, to the joint guardianship of her aunt, Mrs. Leslie, and of some old friends of her own, Lord and Lady Beresford, who, having no unmarried daughter, had insisted on taking Blanche to live with them immediately after her mother’s death, now about four years ago; and she had continued to be the *enfant de la maison* ever since, to the extreme pleasure of the old couple, and apparently with tolerable contentment to herself, until this very autumn, when, for reasons of her own, she had taken a sudden freak to go to Rome with her aunt and cousin.

This freak she had performed, it must be confessed, rather with the precipitation of a spoiled child than with the demureness to be expected from a damsel of seventeen. She had been brought to town by Lord and Lady Beresford, who came up in the hope that now, Sebastopol being at last taken, any day might bring them home their only son, who had been some years absent on active service even before his regiment, the Rifle Brigade, had been ordered to the Crimea. One morning, when Mrs.

Leslie's house in Green-street was astir with preparation, port-manteaus and milliners' baskets being drawn forth from their hiding-places, and ladies and ladies' maids in earnest consultation over them—just three days, in fact, before the southward journey was to begin—Lady Beresford's carriage drove to the door, and out stepped Blanche alone.

'I am going with you to Rome,' was her greeting to her astonished aunt; 'don't say no, for I am quite determined; so if there is anything to be done about passports, please to do it; and as to the money, you must settle all that afterwards.'

'My dear, does Lady Beresford approve?'

'Highly disapproves, of course—very angry indeed; but I have had it all out with her, and she knows she can't help it; so please, please, dear aunt, don't be cross. It is all settled; and Annette is to come in the evening with my luggage, for I am going to stay here till you go.'

Mrs. Leslie remonstrated; Mary remonstrated, though so very glad, that her remonstrances lacked force; but it was all the same—Blanche was quite determined; and it was not till after much cross-questioning that she condescended to reveal the reasons of her proceeding, which were not received by her aunt and cousin with the gravity she expected. However, Mrs. Leslie, of course, made a point of going to Lady Beresford as soon as possible for a private consultation, about which her niece knew nothing; the result of which was that it was settled, though most reluctantly on the part of the poor old couple, that the wilful child must have her way; and accordingly she had set forth with the Leslies, and found herself with them, on the rainy afternoon in question, at the Hôtel de la Croix de Malte, at Genoa.

'Did you ever see such rain?' was her first remark, as it had been Mary's.

'We were just saying,' said Mary, 'that we have a charming prospect for the Magra. It serves us right for aiding and abetting you, you naughty child. If we are drowned, I shall always say you were the Jonah.'

'Satisfactory the information will be to the fishes,' said Blanche, laughing.

'A disconsolate damsel running away from her guardians always comes to grief,' persisted Mary; 'it would not be moral if she did not, for the sake of example.'

Blanche held up her head; her aunt and cousin often affronted her by laughing at her precipitate flight.

‘You may throw back that silly little head of yours,’ said her aunt, ‘but I shall always say the same : that you are behaving like a simpleton. I should think you were the only girl in England who would run away for fear of having to marry a young officer whom every one speaks well of, and who really must have a great deal in him, to be so steady to his profession, and heir to a peerage besides.’

‘There are maidens in Scotland more lovely by far,
Who would gladly be bride to the young Lochinvar,’

sang Mary, in her gay musical voice.

‘I don’t care,’ said Blanche, laughing in spite of herself. ‘If he were an archangel, I would have done just the same. Fancy writing to a man, and telling him to make haste home and marry me : me, whom he has never seen ; and all because I have money ! And what sort of muff must he be to do it ?’

‘My dear, he has not done it,’ said Mary, shouting with laughter.

‘Come, be just, silly child,’ said her aunt ; ‘his sentiments have in no way transpired ; you don’t even know whether his lordship’s letter ever reached him.’

‘A couple of old simpletons, begging their pardons,’ said Mary, ‘to have shown their game. If they had only let Colonel Beresford come home, crowned with laurels, and held their stupid tongues, you would have been safe to have fallen in love with each other.’

‘Fancy,’ said Blanche, still in high indignation, ‘when I have never been out, never seen anything of life, to book me in that way : to tell me it was a settled thing, and that dearest mamma had agreed to it : a likely thing ! You know, aunt, they said it was settled ; Herbert must have consented.’

‘I don’t believe it,’ said her aunt ; ‘but I’m sure I don’t know. The Beresfords are not rich, and young men like money.’

Here the dinner-bell interrupted them ; and Mrs. Leslie and Mary, still laughing, accompanied our incensed heroine down the broad marble staircase.

Any one who has travelled along the beautiful coast-road from Genoa to Pisa, knows that the usual topic at a Genoa table d’hôte is the probability or non-probability of being able to cross the Magra (so at least it was before the railway had been carried over it, as we understand is now the case) ; and as, in the month of October, every one is pressing southward, the Magra is, for

the time being, 'the bourne from whence no traveller returns' to give the desired information.

There happened, however, on the present occasion to be an exception to the general rule. A party of young officers, on their return from the Crimea, had just arrived from Pisa, and could certify that the Magra was passable two days ago, but said to be swelling every moment, as indeed must, they feared, be the case, in such rain.

'I am sorry to hear that,' said a very distinguished-looking young man, who had just come in, and whose beard and bronzed cheek betokened him also to be a Crimean; 'a bad look-out for me.'

'For you, my good fellow?' asked one of the officers, to whom, as indeed to all the rest, the new arrival seemed well known; 'you are going in our direction, are you not? indeed, I thought you were at home already.'

'On the contrary,' said the young man, laughing, 'I am this moment come from Marseilles by the packet.'

'From Marseilles?' exclaimed several voices at once.

'Yes, from Marseilles; and very unpleasant I found it; so that I mean to go on by land. I am going to Rome for the winter, or part of the winter.'

We cannot deny that at this our two young ladies exchanged imperceptible glances; half-conscious thoughts just shooting through their minds to the effect, that they might perhaps meet this very pleasant-looking stranger in some of the parties in Rome. It was certainly within the range of possibility.

'Well, you're a cool hand, that's certain; after two years' absence, not to go and see your own people.'

'After six, you may say; you know our brigade was ordered straight from the Cape to the Crimea.'

'More shame for you, you undutiful fellow! but I suppose there's a strong attraction in Rome?'

'A strong repulsion somewhere else.' This was in a lower tone, but did not escape his opposite neighbours, though the conclusion of the sentence did.

'Well, we shall have you back soon, at any rate,' was the reply. 'You know you're safe of your Victoria Cross.'

The conversation then turned again on the Magra, and every one had something wonderful to relate of that formidable torrent.

There may be even in this age some few who stay at home, and such may happen never to have heard of the Magra. For

their benefit, therefore, we must state that it is a mountain stream between Spezzia and Carrara, which, in its normal state, is a modest brook easily fordable ; but, unfortunately for travellers from the north, the season when they wish to cross it being in the very midst of the autumn rains, it is at that time in anything but this amiable condition ; for a few days of wet sometimes suffice to swell it to such a pitch that it carries away, not only the bridges which men from time to time have attempted to throw over it, but vineyards and olive-groves, and even whole villages, leaving the Val di Magra (of which Dante sings) a scene of utter desolation. When in a state anything approaching to this, it can with difficulty be crossed even in a boat, on account of the swiftness of the current ; and of course it is the interest, and consequently the practice of the innkeepers at Spezzia to persuade travellers that matters are in this condition much oftener than they really are. This refers, as was before said, to the state of things some years ago. If, as we have been told, the Magra is now really spanned by a railway bridge which it is unable to sweep away, it must be a great loss to the Spezzia innkeepers, but a great blessing to the travellers whom they have been in the habit of fleecing.

CHAPTER II.

ALL that evening the rain kept pouring on ; but the next morning the blue sky reappeared, and our travellers set forth in sunshine, brilliant, though fitful, which added enchanting effects of light and shade to the beautiful coast-road along which their first day's journey led them ; but as they reached its termination, the curious rocky Sestri, jutting far out into the sea, the sun was setting in a bank of formidable storm-clouds ; and before the night was over, the pattering of heavy rain against the windows, heard even in the midst of the howling of winds and dashing of waves, promised badly for the Magra.

On the next evening, when the lumbering vettura which contained our three ladies, their two ladies' maids, their courier, Brisson (now getting old and past his work), and an unlimited amount of luggage, arrived at the exquisite little town of Spezzia, all inquiries on this engrossing subject were met, as usual, with a mournful shake of the head.

‘There had been a great deal of rain, but their excellencies would see to-morrow morning.’

When to-morrow came, the aspect of affairs did not appear to be much improved : blow, blow, blow ; rain, rain, rain ; and our ladies, when they came in to breakfast, were greeted by Brissot with a face grievously elongated, and hands uplifted in despair.

‘No Magra to-day, ladies ; it is impossible !’

‘Nonsense, Brissot,’ said Mrs. Leslie, who did not believe in impossibility ; ‘don’t you know the people at the inn always say that ?’

A mournful shake of the head was Brissot’s only reply.

‘Well,’ said Mrs. Leslie, ‘let us have our breakfast in peace, at all events ; and then we will settle what is to be done.’

Spezzia is certainly a little Paradise—there can be no doubt about that ; but no one likes to remain even in Paradise on compulsion ; and on a rainy day, a pretty place has no very material advantage over an ugly one : and the thought of having to maintain a vetturino and four horses through an unlimited futurity of enforced idleness, is enough to change Paradise into something not unlike its antipodes.

However, there seemed no fighting against fate. ‘What must be, must, I suppose,’ said Mrs. Leslie.

‘But, my dear aunt,’ said Blanche, ‘what on earth shall we do with ourselves here all day ?’

‘What, my dear ?—collapse on our beds, of course,’ said Mary, always weary enough to be patient of a day of compulsory repose.

‘Well, I have a suggestion to make,’ said Blanche.

‘Queen Blanche is a woman of vigorous counsels,’ said Mary ; ‘what is it, dear ?—Loop-up our dresses and wade ?’

‘No,’ said Blanche ; ‘float on our crinolines. But seriously, tell me, aunt—must we pay for the man and the horses to-day, whether we use them or not ?’

‘I am afraid it is so written in the bond. The Magra comes decidedly under the head of Force Majeure.’

‘I thought so : well, then, why not use them ? Suppose we tell Brissot to pay the bill, and pack everything, and then drive to the water’s edge, and see for ourselves. If we have to turn back, we shall at least have the comfort of knowing that we have not been cheated.’

‘That is what I call strong-minded,’ said Mrs. Leslie ; ‘a very good plan.’

Accordingly, Brissot was summoned, and, after a little argumentation, consented to the arrangement. In process of time it was announced that all was ready; and they went down to the carriage amid the reiterated assurances of landlord and waiters that they would be back again before dinner-time.

‘Is the Magra passable?’ asked Mrs. Leslie of a long-bearded, sandalled Capuchin, who stood in the hall.

‘Spero, ma dubito,’ was the cautious reply; but there was a twinkle in his eye somewhat reassuring.

Off they drove, splashing through the mud; and at last, as they drew near the sandy, slushing plain of the torrent, a large travelling-carriage and four, straight from the Magra, dashed triumphantly towards them, the coachman nodding to their vetturino as he passed.

‘Si passa,’ said the vetturino; and Brissot, looking back into the carriage, telegraphed that all was right.

When they had got fairly down on the strand, it appeared that the torrent had forced out for itself a second channel of no inconsiderable width, which must be crossed before arriving at the main stream. A little boat was in readiness to ferry over the passengers; but Brissot decided that, as it was raining hard, the ladies had better sit still in the carriage; for the half-naked savage-looking beings who came crowding round, assured him that this channel was easily fordable.

The first thing to be done was to take out the horses, and put oxen in their stead, which they harnessed with ropes; an affair which took more than twenty minutes to accomplish. It was accomplished at last, however; and to the music of the most unearthly shoutings and shriekings, the heavily-laden equipage was launched with a desperate plunge into the rushing, turbid stream. With great difficulty the oxen strained against the current, the carriage lurching most unpleasantly. On they went, however, with struggling plunges, till, in the very midst of the torrent, crack went the ropes, down went the two foremost beasts, kicking and floundering, while the carriage remained planted in the water, which so filled it in a moment, that Mrs. Leslie and one of the maids were sitting up to their knees in water, as in a foot-tub, though the young ladies, with more presence of mind than agility, had tucked their feet up on the seat.

‘Don’t scream,’ whispered Blanche to the maid, who, looking out of window, had seen one wheel portentously elevated. ‘Dear aunt, don’t be frightened; see how shallow it is; these men are all wading; the water is barely up to their waists.’

But Mrs. Leslie was given to screaming : though very enterprising, she wanted presence of mind, and drowning was her especial aversion ; so she screamed on. Mary sat quite still and silent, a shade paler than usual, but showing no other sign of alarm.

‘Dear ladies !—angels of ladies !’ sobbed Brissot, looking back from the box, ‘they are gone back to the town for more rope ; don’t be frightened.’

‘All the way to Spezzia ?’ asked Blanche ; ‘a pleasant prospect !’

The girls scorned the idea of being frightened ; but they felt by no means comfortable when the overloaded carriage began to incline very decidedly to one side ; and the shouting, screaming creatures who were splashing round them did not afford much consolation ; for when Mrs. Leslie asked imploringly, if there were no means of being carried to the further bank, they only shook their heads and pointed to the current, which was sweeping by with dizzying velocity.

At this moment our prisoners heard a tremendous splashing close to them, and looking out, saw a light travelling-carriage containing two gentlemen, one of them apparently an Italian, but the other a young Englishman—the very Crimean officer returned from Marseilles, whom they had met at the table d’hôte, and who, springing into the water, was in an instant at their window.

‘For heaven’s sake, sir,’ shouted Brissot, ‘take care ! you are risking your life ! you can never stand against the current ; and you don’t know all the holes in the river, as these people do.’

‘Never you mind that,’ said the Englishman ; and in a moment he looked to the broken harness, saw what was the matter, and, rapidly desiring his Italian friend (who showed no disposition to tempt the stream himself) to drive on rapidly to Sarzana and order abundant fires, he set himself to repair the mischief with straps from the portmanteaus ; to the astonishment of the unaccustomed savages, whom he pressed into his service, and to the unbounded gratitude and admiration of Brissot.

The ladies scarcely saw what was going on ; but the very presence of an Englishman and an officer re-assured them ; and when their carriage resumed its equilibrium, and the oxen began slowly to move it forwards, before there had been time to bring rope from Spezzia, they knew whose resource and promptitude they had to thank.

At last the carriage, with the ladies still in it, was safely

stowed away on board the large flat-bottomed boat which is ferried across the main stream, and which makes slow progress against the powerful current.

‘I hope you are not very wet,’ said the Englishman, coming to the window.

‘Not materially, thank you,’ said Blanche.

‘Only mamma,’ said Mary, ‘who chose to sit with her feet in the water.’

‘I don’t know how to thank you enough,’ said Mrs. Leslie. ‘I am sure you saved our lives.’

‘I can hardly flatter myself so much as that,’ said the young man, smiling. ‘I don’t think you were in any real danger.’

‘We were in a great deal of fear, at all events,’ said Blanche laughing. ‘I don’t think I ever felt frightened before.’

‘Then indeed you behaved like a heroine, for I did not hear any approach to a scream.’

‘Except from me,’ interrupted Mrs. Leslie; ‘I never could stand cold water.’

‘I am afraid you have had too much of it, dear mamma,’ said Mary anxiously. ‘How you shiver! you are drenched through! I do hope you have not caught cold.’

‘Quick, quick! get to Sarzana as fast as possible,’ said the Englishman, expediting as much as he could the tardy process of landing and harnessing, and then mounting the seat by the vetturino. His presence seemed to put a little mettle both into driver and horses, and it was not long before they arrived.

‘I hope there is a good fire for these ladies, and plenty of hot water,’ said he, in excellent Italian, to the obsequious padrone; ‘they have got wet in the Magra.’

‘All ready, eccellenza: the other signore ordered it; if these ladies will follow me.’

The Englishman, without waiting for a word of thanks, hurried them to the door of their apartment, and took his leave. There they were much comforted at the sight of what seemed half a tree already blazing on the hearth, while men and maids in abundance were proffering hot water and warming-pans.

These last were much to the purpose; for Mrs. Leslie, at least, was so thoroughly drowned as to be fit for nothing but bed, especially as the luggage had got so wet that almost every article had to be unpacked and hung out to dry beside the ample fire, before a change could be procured. The ladies’-maids were in great woe over soaked dresses and dripping bonnets; but the young ladies themselves bore the *contretemps* with smiling philo-

sophy, more occupied, if the truth be told, with speculating on who the hero might be who had so opportunely come to their rescue, than with mourning over the damage to their wardrobe incurred by the misadventure.

Their curiosity as to their benefactor was not, however, destined to be then satisfied; for when, after drying, dressing, and dining, they inquired for him, they were told that he had only just stayed to change his dress, and then had driven on with his companion towards Pietra Santa, *en route* for Pisa and Florence.

CHAPTER III.

‘WELL, Blanche, how do you feel now you are starting for your first ball? I remember I felt all in a cold creep from head to foot.’

‘Yes,’ said Blanche laughing, ‘and vexed your mother, I know, by looking like a piece of faded waxwork, as she is always calling you.’

‘But I want to know how you feel yourself, and that is just what you won’t tell me. Let me look at you: no faded waxwork there, certainly, though I am not sure that you are not the least bit paler than usual; let me feel your pulse.’

‘Like Hamlet to his mother? You won’t get any more satisfaction out of me than Mrs. Hamlet did out of him; here—feel,’ holding out her white, braceleted wrist.

‘It temperately keeps time,’ said Mary; ‘I cannot deny it; but don’t you feel in the least as if something were going to happen?’

‘O, Mary, it is only in story-books that heroines meet their destiny, like Cinderella, at their first ball.’

‘Is it only in story-books?’

‘I can’t judge; of course you can, who have been out one season already.’

‘Well, not one’s destiny, perhaps; but things do happen at balls; and I should think in Rome particularly, where all people worth knowing are sure to turn up, as mamma says, at one time or another. Suppose, now, we were to meet our hero of the *Magra*, would you call that an adventure?’

‘A very likely one to happen, if only we were going to an English house; he must be in Rome by this time.’

‘No chance of meeting any English to-night, except such as have first-rate introductions.’

‘Why should he not have first-rate introductions?’

‘It depends on who he is, of course. This is a very exclusive house; the people never gave a ball before; it is only on the occasion of the marriage of the young Principe; for balls are not begun in the regular course of things, I imagine: so mamma says, and she knows Rome and Roman ways.’

‘Every one will take us for sisters, especially as we are dressed alike.’

‘Yes; and as you are Miss Leslie, and so much more imposing, while I am only Miss Mary Leslie, and of contemptible stature, you will be set down for the eldest, which I consider a great triumph, I being really two years ahead.’

‘Let me look at you, my dears,’ said Mrs. Leslie, coming into the room, ‘and see if I approve of your appearance.’

She must have been fastidious if she had not approved of the two graceful figures which stood before her for inspection, throwing off burnous and shawl, and revealing the simple tarlatan dresses looped with roses and lilies of the valley, while a wreath of the same flowers crowned each young head, equally becoming to the dark classic braids of the one and the luxuriant golden tresses of the other. She was fastidious enough, but this time she did approve thoroughly, and was well pleased to have such a niece and daughter to present to the Roman world, of which she herself, in her youth, had been no inconsiderable ornament.

The two young English girls were thoroughly appreciated at the Princess del D—’s ball, and the more so that they were the only English, and consequently the only unmarried ladies present. They were engaged for half the evening before they had been in the room five minutes.

‘Signorina mia, mi permetti di presentarle il Signor Colonnello,’—something quite foreign to any English name that was ever heard of.

Blanche looked up, and found that the bridegroom Principe was presenting to her no other than the hero of the *Magra*. She was sitting at that moment by her aunt, who, though she had no idea what the name was, could do no other than frankly extend her hand, and tell the gentleman how glad she was to meet him again, and how glad she should be to see him if he would call the following evening at her apartments in the *Piazza di Spagna*.

It was rather late in the ball, and Blanche was engaged, as

we have seen, for many dances ; however, she gladly promised her hand for the first dance she had free. The stranger did not seem enthusiastic about dancing ; for when he found that Mary also was engaged, he stood aloof, a mere spectator, until the time came when he could claim Blanche as his partner.

‘Who is he?’ inquired Mrs. Leslie of one of the ladies of her acquaintance.

‘Un certo colonello, non so,’ answered she, with the peculiar Italian shrug ; ‘viene da Crimea ; figlio di milord a buonissima famiglia ; ma il nome, non lo so.’

‘Those English names are so difficult,’ said another ; ‘Creco, Creci, mi pare ; che so lo ?’

Among the numbers who were presented to Mrs. Leslie and her young ladies they recognised the Italian gentleman who was the travelling companion of their friend at the Magra, and who was introduced as the Principe B— ; but as the young ladies were engaged, and so unable to dance with him, he merely bowed and sought a partner elsewhere, which was a disappointment, as some information might have been hoped for from him.

As it was, they were obliged to remain in ignorance, promising themselves to search the visitors’ book at Piale’s the next morning, which Mrs. Leslie felt the more imperative as she could not help seeing that the unknown and Blanche seemed to be getting on remarkably well. Blanche, as a beauty and an heiress, was no inconsiderable charge ; and though her aunt had assisted her escape from the summary ‘marrying-up’ which her simple-hearted guardians had projected, yet in her secret soul she thought the match they had proposed a very good one, and had resolved that, while under her care, the wilful child should not throw herself away on any one of inferior pretensions.

‘That unknown is nice, is he not ?’ asked Mary, after they had returned home. ‘I was so sorry I was not able to dance with him.’

‘O, Mary ! I never met any one half so nice ; so gentle, so unboastful, and reserved about himself and his own doings, and yet so full of interesting stories, when you once draw him out ; I could listen to him for ever.’

‘Desdemona ?’ whispered Mary.

‘My dear,’ said Mrs. Leslie, with something almost sharp in her voice, ‘all soldiers are like that. If you had waited to see Herbert Beresford, as you ought, I have no doubt he would have been just the same. I always heard he was particularly agreeable.’

‘Did you ask your friend if he knew Colonel Beresford?’ inquired Mary.

‘Not I,’ said Blanche impatiently; ‘we had something better to talk about.’

Mrs. Leslie felt slightly anxious, but she knew her *métier* of chaperon better than to let it appear; so she chattered, and let the girls chatter as fast as they pleased, while they drank their tea, and then sent them off to bed.

‘I shall write to Lady Beresford, and advise her to send Herbert out here, if he falls into the plan.’ Such was her ultimatum, as she laid her head on the pillow in the gray dawn of morning.

‘Now, mamma,’ said Mary, after a very late breakfast, ‘let us run across to Piale’s and discover our incognito.’

The unenlightened in Roman ways must be informed that Piale is a bookseller in the Piazza di Spagna, and that on his table lies a book where most of the English visitors inscribe their names.

‘Now, let me see,’ said Mary, while Blanche looked over her shoulder.

‘Captain Smith;—no, he can’t be Captain Smith, can he, mamma?’

‘Yes;—why not?’

‘Major Cresswell;—that’s the man.’

‘Yes, yes; they said his name was Creci, which was very near for Italians.’

‘But they called him colonel,’ objected Blanche.

‘The Italians call every officer colonello. That’s the man, I’m certain. “Hôtel d’Angleterre.”’

‘Yes,’ said Blanche, ‘he said he was at the Hôtel d’Angleterre, very near us.’

‘That settles the point,’ said Mrs. Leslie; ‘Cresswell: not a bad name.’

A sudden exclamation from Mary startled them, and she pointed where, much lower down on the list, stood in characters unmistakably legible, the name of ‘Lieut.-Colonel Honourable Herbert Beresford.’

The ladies looked at one another petrified. Mrs. Leslie and Mary could scarcely keep their countenances, but Blanche was in towering indignation.

‘This is too bad,’ she said, the tears starting into her eyes; ‘they have positively sent him after me. I call this downright persecution. I will never be introduced to him—never.’

‘My dear, Piale will hear you,’ whispered Mrs. Leslie, ‘and you will be the talk of Rome. No one shall tease you while you are with me ; but it won’t hurt you to meet the young man in society like any one else. Come home, and don’t be silly, and we’ll think what we had better do.’

Home they went, only a few steps off, and sat down to discuss the matter.

‘The more I think of it,’ said Mrs. Leslie, after trying hard for a few minutes to compose her countenance so as to harmonise with the grave displeasure which Blanche’s had assumed, ‘the more inexplicable it seems, or at least the more I am persuaded that the whole affair is simply accidental. He can’t have had time, can he, to have gone back to England, seen his father and mother, found you fled, and rushed here after you? Only think how rapidly we travelled ;—it is impossible.’

‘They probably wrote to him at Malta,’ said Blanche.

‘No time,’ said Mrs. Leslie. ‘What was the date of his arrival, Mary, did you notice?’

‘There was no date, mamma, of that ; only Hôtel d’Angleterre.’

‘O, then,’ said Blanche, ‘we will ask Major Cresswell about him when he comes this evening, as he is at the same hotel.’

At that moment Mary started, as a sudden thought struck her ; and shot a very significant glance at her mother, who responded to it by a rapid gesture enforcing silence as to the idea which had evidently occurred to both minds at once.

‘It is very important,’ said poor Blanche, ‘and exceedingly annoying.’

‘My dear,’ said Mary, ‘you cannot complain that your enemy has been very aggressive. Surely he might have called on mamma, if he had chosen it, so old a friend of his family.’

‘Perhaps he is only just arrived,’ interrupted Blanche. ‘I know all my pleasure in Rome is gone now.’

‘Not quite, I hope. But come, I see your head is aching ; let me bathe it with some eau de Cologne, or you will not be fit to see Major Cresswell this evening.’

CHAPTER IV.

IN the evening the ladies were all, for various reasons, in a state of some trepidation, as they took their seats in their salon after their late dinner, and began to expect the arrival of their

guest. Mary was excellent on such occasions, and so, indeed, was Blanche too, generally, but just now she was more unhinged than usual, and felt quite grateful to Mary when she proposed their drowning their anxieties in a rattling duet.

In spite of the rattle, however, they kept their ears open, and at the first ring of their door-bell stopped with one accord.

A card was brought in—

‘LIEUT.-COLONEL BERESFORD;’

and at the same moment entered its owner, who proved to be no other than the hero of the *Magra*.

At the first instant, there was an awkward taken-aback pause; but it was only for an instant.

‘So you are Colonel Beresford?’ said Mrs. Leslie, as she saw that he looked rather surprised at his reception. ‘We have been to-day searching Piale’s book to ascertain your identity. We settled that you could not be Captain Smith, but that you might be Major Cresswell, and, I can scarcely tell why, but you were established in our minds as Major Cresswell, which made us start when you were introduced by another name.’

Colonel Beresford laughed at the explanation, and confessed that he had been in something of a similar puzzle, but that Piale’s had not occurred to him; in fact, he had not put his own name there—some one had done it for him. He had forgotten the number Mrs. Leslie had told him, but had been directed to the apartment of the Signora Inglese with the due bellissime signorine, and had only acquired a distinct idea of her name just this moment, from the card nailed up outside her door.

These mutual explanations proved altogether satisfactory, and set all parties at ease. The evening passed off delightfully, chiefly in music; Mary’s clever playing and Blanche’s beautiful singing were thoroughly appreciated; and when, towards the end, the party became increased by several Italians dropping in, Mrs. Leslie observed, and this time with unalloyed satisfaction, that Colonel Beresford took advantage of every opportunity for talking apart with Blanche.

‘It is a pity,’ he said in taking leave, ‘that Cresswell should lose the great pleasure of your acquaintance because he does not happen to be me; may I bring him? I can answer for his being a very nice fellow.’

‘O, certainly,’ said Mrs. Leslie; ‘we are always at home in the evening till nine o’clock.’

When he was gone, the three ladies gathered round the hearth, and put on more wood, as preparing for a talk ; but for a few moments all sat silent.

‘Blanche, my dear,’ at last said Mrs. Leslie, ‘this man’s being here is pure accident ; nothing else, depend upon it. There has been no time for communication with the people at home ; besides, they promised me faithfully you should not be molested.’

‘O, as to that, mamma,’ interrupted Mary, ‘he may have found out that Blanche was here, and come of his own accord, without consulting any one. It certainly strikes me as strange, in so amiable a person as he seems to be, coming here to enjoy himself instead of going home to see his father and mother. Don’t you remember he said something at that table-d’hôte of having gone as far as Marseilles, homewards, and then turned back?’

‘I am quite sure,’ said Blanche, ‘that, be all that as it may, he has no idea that I am myself ; he takes us for sisters.’

‘Well, well,’ said Mrs. Leslie, ‘no freeborn Englishwoman can be married against her will. You are safe here with me, and he is a very pleasant person, and will do to sing and dance with, if you don’t choose to marry him. And now go to bed, child, or you’ll lose your roses, and then you’ll have to submit to being married for your money, after all.’

CHAPTER V.

ONE evening after another passed very pleasantly. Major Cresswell was introduced, and proved to be a very superior man, in Mary’s opinion, at least ; and her opinion, luckily, was right, and he appeared to consider her a very delightful young lady. Morning engagements grew out of evening ones ; visits to picture-galleries, riding-parties in the Campagna, and, as the days lengthened and brightened, expeditions to Frascati and Albano and Tivoli—all the spring pleasures so well known to those who have had the privilege of enjoying a season in Rome. The Misses Leslie were much sought after, but by none so assiduously as by Major Cresswell and Colonel Beresford. This last soon discovered, what no one attempted to conceal, that the two girls were not sisters, but cousins ; yet he evidently had no idea that the Miss Leslie in Rome and the Miss Leslie, his father’s

ward, were identical. This was often discussed as a matter of wonder between Mary and her mother; as to Blanche, she very soon became mute on everything connected with Colonel Beresford.

‘It is very odd indeed,’ said Mrs. Leslie, ‘that he should suspect nothing. I suppose his mother is so glad that he happens to have turned up in Rome, that she has the wit at last to hold her tongue, as I have written to urge her to do.’

‘But how can it be that it never occurs to him, her name being Blanche too?’

‘That is the thing I suspect; the Beresfords, you know, never call her Blanche, but Lina, from her second name, Caroline, on account of their having a Blanche of their own, Lady Devereux. I daresay they always wrote of Lina Leslie, if they ever wrote to him about her at all.’

‘I see. Well, it is manifest enough how things are going: all’s well that ends well.’

‘All’s well that ends well,’ echoed her mother, kissing her forehead with a secret prayer that all might end well for her also, of which there seemed every probability.

One beautiful evening in March, Mrs. Leslie and her young ladies went with a few friends to see the Coliseum by moonlight, and Colonel Beresford and Major Cresswell were, as usual, of the party. As soon as Colonel Beresford arrived, it was manifest, to Blanche at least, that something was the matter, for a cloud sat on his brow, usually so clear and open, and he seemed uncomfortable and abstracted, very unlike himself. However, he took his accustomed place by her side, and appeared more anxious even than usual to converse with her as much apart as circumstances allowed. As the whole party, divided into twos and threes, wandered about in the moonlight, it was not difficult to secure a sufficient *tête-à-tête* for confidential conversation; but it was long before either spoke. At last, as with an effort, ‘I am afraid,’ he said, ‘that to-night I must wish you good-bye.’

‘Good-bye?’

‘Yes; I must be at Civita Vecchia in time to catch the direct boat to-morrow night.’

‘Why? has anything happened to your father or mother?’ asked Blanche anxiously.

‘No, nothing. I may as well tell you; it is a qualm of conscience, but one I can’t get over. I think, after six years’ absence, I have behaved very cruelly in coming here at all; and to-day I have had a letter urging me to stay on and enjoy myself.’

‘Which has acted by contraries?’ asked Blanche, inwardly smiling.

‘Exactly; it made me feel what a brute I have been; and so I’m off.’

Blanche dared not trust herself to speak; and he went on:

‘But I cannot go without asking if I may ever hope to meet you again. I think you must have seen—you can scarcely have mistaken—my feelings. Only just tell me if I may come back again; when I have seen my father and mother, may I come back to you? In short, can you give me any hope?’

What Blanche’s answer was, we will not inquire; indeed, it might be reported as ‘inaudible in the gallery.’ Whatever it was, however, it seemed to give satisfaction, for the colonel’s next observation, after a moment or two of entranced silence, was, that ‘he was too happy.’

‘But, Colonel Beresford,’ said Blanche at last, rallying all her dignity, ‘I must not let you go without explaining everything. I do not know, but I think you have not found out who I am.’

‘Who you are? Blanche—my own Blanche, I hope. What can you mean?’

‘You know about Lina Leslie, your father’s ward?’

‘Well?’

‘My name is Blanche Caroline, and they called me Lina.’

‘Is it possible?’ He stopped short, and gazed in her face; and in spite of the depths of sentiment in which they were plunged, they both burst into a hearty laugh.

‘Well, that is a *dénouement*. My Blanche and Lina Leslie one and the same! My Blanche, I must tell you that Lina has been my nightmare, my dread, my *bête noire*: it was to escape marrying you that I came here instead of going home.’

‘And it was to escape marrying you that I came here.’

‘Is it possible? I had no idea that they had spoken of you. I got letters at Marseilles, urging me to hurry home and secure this wonderful heiress, about whom they had been boring my life out already; so I turned about at once, and sailed back to Genoa in the very first packet.’

‘They told me I was to marry you; so I set off at once, and ran away here with my aunt and cousin.’

‘Well, if that is not poetical justice, I don’t know what is.’

Very much amused were Mrs. Leslie and Mary at this *dénouement*, which, even in the dim Roman lamplight, was revealed to

them by their first glance at Blanche's tell-tale face as they drove home.

'You are a couple of undutiful children,' said Mrs. Leslie, when Colonel Beresford called the next morning, before starting for Civita Vecchia, 'and do not deserve for things to turn out so happily.'

'Very true,' said the colonel; 'and therefore do you not think that we are bound to make what reparation we can by carrying out our parents' wishes as soon as possible?'

All parties being at last agreed, there was nothing to wait for but the arrangements of lawyers and dressmakers. These, however—a splendid fortune and proportionately splendid trousseau being in question—were sufficiently tardy, or at least would have been, but that Major Cresswell's regiment was unexpectedly ordered to Corfu. Major Cresswell would not depart without Mary, by this time his promised bride, and Blanche would not hear of being married without Mary for her bridesmaid. So settlements and lace flounces had to be expedited; and early in the month of June, Blanche became, what she had so often vowed she would rather die than become, the wife of Herbert Beresford.

And now eight years have passed, and neither party has repented; they can scarcely even regret the folly of their mutual avoidance, as it brought about so satisfactory a result; though they are quite ready to laugh at each other and at themselves, and to tell their little ones the story of their 'much ado about nothing.'

PATTY'S REVENGE.

A Story in Three Parts.

PART I.

‘WHO’LL have a game of croquet?’ exclaimed one of three idle young men who had been lazily knocking the balls about the ground. ‘It’s going to be piping hot to-day; the sooner we persuade some of those young ladies to come out the better.’

‘Persuade away, then,’ answered his companion—‘England expects every man to do his duty. I suppose it’s the duty of Henry St. George to make himself generally agreeable. Hurrah for the 12th of August!—it will be St. George’s duty to make himself exclusively agreeable to the grouse after that day. To-day is the 2d. I can stand a few days’ repose after the fatigues of my journey, unless the young ladies are unusually heavy on hand.’

‘Here come three; Grahame, with his mallet, brings up the rear. They are not all sisters, that is clear enough.’

‘Shall it be gentlemen *versus* ladies?’ inquired Mr. Grahame, as he came on to the ground.

‘That can’t be fair,’ remonstrated Mr. St. George; ‘we shall be too strong for the ladies.’

‘Not at all,’ exclaimed three voices at once; ‘we defy you. Our skill is a match for your strength.’

‘So let it be, then,’ said Mr. Grahame. ‘Henry St. George, Fernham, and myself fight the three ladies: it is their own fault if we win; they defied us. Hoare, you lazy fellow, you may look on.’

That same party had not met before on Cranbourne grounds: certain preliminary rules had therefore to be arranged. Were local rules to be followed, or must printed rules be binding? Was the game to have captains, or should each player be independent?

'Blue ball begins!' called out Mr. Grahame.

'Patty, that's you,' said Mabel Grahame, his sister; and a pretty girl, dressed in white muslin with blue ribbons, stepped forward mallet in hand.

The three girls playing croquet that morning were Mabel Grahame, Rose Melville, and Patty Mitford, all in the full enjoyment of youth, health, and good spirits.

Mabel Grahame's home was at Cranbourne. She was tall, dark, and elegant; her composed, stately manner would lead one to suppose that her dress had not occupied her thoughts for one minute; and yet the effect had been studied, from those violet-silk stockings, Balmoral boots, delicate green and white muslin looped up over her ample crinoline, to the little white-straw hat on her head. And not one pin or hair was out of place.

Mabel knew that her estimate in the world's opinion stood high, and the value she placed upon herself was certainly not too low. Rose Melville was every one's friend, but nobody's love; merry, laughing, ready for every exertion, seconding every one's proposal, falling naturally into the seat which no one else would take in a carriage, always good-humoured, she was an excellent confidante, because her sympathies were so ready, and was a born daisy-picker. She was small and a brunette; no one had been known to decide whether her bright face was pretty or not; every one liked to look into Rose's face, and what did it matter why they looked again?

Patty Mitford was pretty,—there could be no two opinions on that subject; though, whilst none doubted about liking Rose, Patty had her warm admirers and her equally warm detractors. In every movement of her small well-rounded figure there was an expression of decision and determination. She was a blonde: the braids of her light pale golden hair did not conceal the contour of her well-shaped head; her features were small and finely cut; there was an air of firmness in the lines of her jaw and of her well-curved mouth; her face was lightened up by the deep-blue eyes which openly returned your gaze with a look, as her humour might be, of fun, frankness, courage, or defiance, but which seldom bore that expression of gentleness to be looked for in eyes of heavenly blue.

Patty was young, happy, strong in her strength and in her own attractions. She felt the world before her, and, with the happy confidence of youth, she believed that her lot was in her own making. She enjoyed her life, because hitherto the world had only spread out its smiles and its favours before her. Dis-

appointment, sickness, or weariness were words without meaning to her—she had known nothing of them in her own home, and she carefully eschewed meeting with them in the homes of others. Such words seemed truly to have little connection with the strong frame and happy face that handled her mallet so actively this August morning.

Cranbourne Towers was a pleasant place in which to spend a long vacation or a summer holiday; and the Grahames were pleasant people to have as host and hostess.

Cranbourne combined many attractions. There was a commodious house facing the sea, standing in extensive grounds, where old timber and rare shrubs abounded; a silvery stream, enclosed by the grounds, forced its way through fern-covered rocks and narrow valleys to the parent sea, and added by its presence much to the beauty of the place. Cranbourne offered good shooting to the sportsman: it was in a moor district, and grouse and black game were plentiful on Mr. Grahame's estate; the disciple of Izaak Walton found trout dashing swiftly in and out of the dark pools shaded by the rocks, so carefully preserved by their owner, that they only awaited some skilful hand to draw them to land. The pedestrians, and those who dabbled in ferns, found occupation sufficient; whilst for the young ladies, and those who, like Mabel Grahame, came languid and fagged from the labours of a London season, gentle sea-bathing, a saunter in the dene, a drive with Mrs. Grahame's white ponies, or, as the acmé of exertion, a game of croquet was at their service. There were greater exertions prepared for those who, like most of the present party, brought youth, country health, and country spirits to aid their enjoyment.

Fernham, St. George, and Hoare were friends of Mr. Grahame. They were collected, with guns and dogs, to do honour to the approaching 12th of August, 'St. Grouse's Day,' as it has before now been termed, and, so far, with reason, for few saints' days of the Gregorian calendar receive an equal homage, from, at least, the male portion of the population. These men had been college chums together, and found a zest in recounting their old experiences, which the society of more recent friends never gave them. Grahame had married a wife, and had settled at once into a country gentleman and magistrate; Fernham was converted from mad Fernham of college days into the steady rector of a country parish; Hoare was junior partner in his father's bank; whilst Henry St. George had found a berth in the Treasury, which enabled him to be as much about town as he could desire.

Men about town certainly have an advantage over their country neighbours in dress and appearance, and in a general knowledge of everything that is going on, which is often useful, and which at a dinner-party is quite invaluable.

St. George could not only boast of London polish over his companions, but had by nature been endowed with some of her choicest favours.

He was well-made, with handsome features, good eyes, and a rich melodious voice. He had never earned the character of a flirt; the utmost that could be said of him was, that he knew his power in women's society, and was always at ease when with them.

He was agreeable, pleasant, good-looking; not made of the mould from which heroes or the great men of the world spring, but of that commoner mould from which good sort of men come, who, though unable to carve out a lot for themselves, can fill the one ready carved for them satisfactorily and well.

The Fates had borne these people together, to spend a month in a country-house; collected them from Gloucestershire, Derbyshire, London, and Herefordshire, into this remote place in Scotland; as they are always, even at this very time, sending those to meet who for long years have been travelling unconsciously towards each other, destined to play some eventful part in each other's life's history. Thousands will meet, and part asunder again as they met; but the month to some may be the month of their lifetime, colouring all future events for them; the hidden era from which they date all future occurrences.

'I have missed the ring,' exclaimed Patty, with an impatient swing of her mallet; 'well, at any rate I don't often miss.'

'Are you a formidable enemy?' inquired Mr. Fernham.

'A dangerous enemy, but a constant friend,' replied Rose for her companion.

'Pray class me at once amongst your friends,' exclaimed Mr. Fernham.

'How can I? you are on the enemy's side,' she said, laughing; for having passed through her ring, she struck Mr. Fernham's ball, and croqueted it far away.

'If you deny me your friendship, at any rate treat me mercifully, for I am weak; pity me.'

'I despise weakness; I never pity: let all have a fair start for the fight, and those who can't win may go to the wall.'

'O Patty, how can you say so?' said Rose, with a shocked face.

The game progressed briskly; each ball struggled its way through the nine rings towards the first post. 'Every man for himself, and God for us all,' is the world's version of 'Do unto all men as you would they should do unto you;' and every man for himself is the first rule in croquet. No quarter allowed. 'Be just, but never be generous,' are croquet maxims. Though you are a rover, and you know you are on the winning side, no feelings of pity must come between you and your prey, that red ball, which has been pursued with ill luck all through the game, and is owned by Miss Cobb's weak wrist; every time it reached a ring, it has been mercilessly knocked away by some strong arm. There it goes again! Poor Miss Cobb! Your party have been waiting so long for you to get through those last three rings: and feeling that all eyes are upon you only makes you more nervous, more certain to hit up far beyond the desired goal.

You must not look cross, whatever your feelings may be, and though you are silently vowing that nothing shall ever tempt you to hold a mallet again; a vow only made to be broken, for, in the present day, a young lady might as well chronicle a vow never to walk out of her own grounds, as never to attempt to drive a round ball through a ring on the lawn again.

There was no Miss Cobb on Cranbourne grounds to-day, inwardly suffering, outwardly smiling. The three young ladies made a good fight for victory; and for any croquets they received they returned a fair equivalent.

'What a muff, Fernham, to have missed that ring!' exclaimed the host of Cranbourne, impatiently; 'can't you see straight before you?'

'Mabel, that *is* a spoon,' he says to his sister, as she executed some good hit, straight across the field.

'A fluke, if you like, Mr. Grahame,' suggested Patty, 'but certainly not a spoon.'

At first the ladies seemed to carry all before them; they knew the ground, which none of their adversaries, except Mr. Grahame, did; and to know your ground is a great pull in croquet science.

The girls' balls kept together; they had no acknowledged captain, although Patty Mitford unconsciously took the lead; no event in life is too trifling to show strength of character, or the power of a firm will over weaker ones.

Still, towards the close of the game, the gentlemen had recovered lost ground; they were ahead, with the exception of Mr. St. George's ball, which was lagging behind.

'All depends upon the green ball,' exclaims Patty excitedly; 'do hit it, Rose!'

Rose does her best; takes steady aim, and—misses. Patty stamped her foot, by way of letting off the annoyance which politeness prevented her expressing in words.

'How unfortunate! I am so sorry,' said Rose.

'It's an ill wind that blows no one any good,' remarked the owner of the green ball; 'I shall get on now.'

It was his turn; the ball went through two rings, but hit the last ring, and struck away.

'Hurrah! I am so glad!' exclaimed Miss Mitford, clapping her hands with delight. Even Mabel Grahame smiled, but gently; her expressions of pleasure and surprise dared not be so vivid as those of Patty Mitford, for fear she should disarrange the beautifully-plaited coils of her back-hair, so tastefully arranged on her neck.

It was Patty's ball to play next. With a steady hand she hit the green ball, and croqueted it behind its ring, far across the lawn.

'The game is lost!' exclaimed Mr. Grahame; 'the next lady's ball will hit them off, Miss Mitford has brought them so close to each other.'

Mr. Hoare, who was lying on the grass, looking on, called out,

'Not lost yet, Grahame; a lucky chance may still turn the game.'

'We feel very safe,' said Miss Mitford, turning towards him with a smile of conscious success.

It had come round to green ball's play again. Green ball played, and, by a lucky chance, hit some thirty yards across the field, through the last ring, and stopped close upon Miss Mitford's ball.

The excitement was intense. At the next hit, Patty's ball was croqueted.

'What shall I do with it?'

'She's a dangerous enemy; hit her off; make her dead,' exclaimed Mr. Grahame.

'No, no; that would be very shabby play!' cried out the three ladies.

'Do it; it's allowed by the rules.'

Before another protest could be made, blue ball had ceased to live; it had struck the post, and died ingloriously by the hand of its enemy. St. George's stroke was a death-blow to the

ladies' side; two more hits, and the gentlemen threw up their mallets in token of victory.

Patty looked very indignant. She never liked being contradicted or thwarted; but it was especially provoking to see success slip from her when so nearly within her grasp.

'You need not fancy that you have won the game fairly,' she said, walking up to Mr. St. George, who was standing a little apart from the others; 'at any rate, it is a mean cowardly way of winning a game, which I utterly despise!'

'I followed the orders of my leader,' replied Mr. St. George, rather surprised at being so summarily attacked by a young lady to whom he had not even had an introduction.

'That is no excuse,' she replied angrily; 'you've quite spoilt the game; it is a pity to be so weak that you cannot choose fair from foul play,' she added scornfully.

'This warm-tempered young lady is excessively pretty,' thought St. George to himself. 'I had no idea I was committing a capital offence,' he added deprecatingly; 'I am very sorry you are annoyed.'

'It is not that I am annoyed,' said Patty; 'but I hate anything sneaking; I like a fair open fight; and I do call it sneaking to kill an enemy's ball for fear it should hit you away.'

She turned to join Mabel and Rose, who were coming across the field. They rallied her on being so excited; they had borne their defeat with much more philosophy. She listened without replying, for she was thoroughly cross—with the game, the ground, the gentlemen, and with herself; more cross than the occasion required, she must confess.

'It's very hot,' she said, as she reached the house. And entering by the drawing-room window, she seated herself in a low easy-chair, where she remained, with a novel upside down on her lap, in a sleepy kind of meditation, until the luncheon-bell rung.

'Can I persuade any one to drive out with me?' inquired Mrs. Grahame; 'I have several calls to make.'

No one volunteered; every one thought the heat so great, that a slow saunter on the shore was all they felt inclined to do.

'I know,' said Mrs. Grahame, 'what that means: you will scramble over the rocks, and when I return from my drive, I shall find you tired and exhausted. However, please yourselves.'

Mrs. Grahame prided herself upon allowing her visitors to please themselves; she provided various means of amusement, and liked every one to select those which they preferred.

There was some loitering about the billiard-table after luncheon, a pretence at a game of play with the little Grahames, who were starting, with a staff of nurses, for their afternoon exercise, until the three young ladies appeared, each with a novel in her hand, in sea-shore costume. Sea-shore costume meant a material warranted not to lose colour from exposure to sea-air, not to show sand or marks of water, and not to tear from friction with sharp stones.

'We were thinking of trying some rifle-shooting on the beach,' said Mr. Fernham; 'shall we disturb your literary studies?'

'Not at all,' was the reply; 'we will look on; what is your target?'

'Champagne-bottles,' answered Mr. Fernham.

The rifle-shooting continued some time. Patty accepted the rifle which was offered to her, the two other girls having refused it. Her wrists were strong, her aim steady, and she hit well.

Rifle-shooting cannot continue for ever; they wearied of the amusement, and giving the rifles into the care of the servant, the pleasure-hunters this sultry afternoon sought some other mode of killing time.

'I should so much like to see if the *Asplenium marinum* has spread since last autumn,' said Rose; 'it grows in a cave round that point.'

'The *Asplenium* how much?' inquired Mr. Hoare, who was walking by her side.

'*Marinum*,' she answered; 'it is a rare fern, and yet it grows profusely in this cave.'

Rose was a fern-collector *con amore*.

Notwithstanding their asseverations to Mrs. Grahame, they began their scramble over the rocks to the cave where Rose wished to go.

The young-lady visitors at Cranbourne always enjoyed scrambling over these rocks, cutting their boots and wetting their feet; and whether or no the young men enjoyed it, they always followed. It was a taste akin to the strange one which impels all visitors, at some sea-bathing places, to walk in a stooping position, at the imminent risk of bringing on congestion of the brain, in search of minute fossils and stones, usually of no value when discovered. They had a beautiful walk round several points to the cave; and although the fern was a subject of interest to no one except Rose, the spot where it grew unseen, moistened by the splash of water at high-tide, was, from its

beauty, interesting to every one. It was a fitting abode for Anderson's mermaid-princess, when she rose from her emerald home to gaze on the blue sky, which was, to her mind, a part of her hero-prince.

The tide was out, but the cave was still moist from the receding waters; the reflected rays of the evening sun caught the green damp and coloured stones of the arches in the cave, and lit them up with a thousand lights. The party seated themselves on the stones, and forgot the course of time whilst they watched the fishing-boats and the ships in the distance, and sang glees and merry songs.

Mabel was the first to disturb the party, by jumping up in alarm. Not the approaching tide caused her fears, but—

‘It is dressing-time; we shall be late for dinner!’

The unwelcome summons might not be disregarded; and careless of pools of sea-water, wet feet, and bruised ankles, they retraced their steps to Cranbourne.

It was a moonlight night; an August moon was pouring its full rays on the blue sea. Where is there a more lovely sight than the rich harvest moon shining on the calm blue sea, making one low narrow line of light from the coast to the distant horizon, and suggesting to the mind the path of light by which the angels descended from heaven as by a ladder, when they bore messages of love to the wearied son of Israel?

Mrs. Grahame looked out of the drawing-room window after dinner, and said, ‘It was despising heaven’s gifts to remain within four walls on such an evening;’ so they all adjourned to the terrace overlooking the sea, and walked up and down until after ten o’clock.

Patty walked by the side of Mrs. Grahame, and was more silent than usual. As the rest of the party returned to the house, she lingered near the porch, professedly to gather a rose, until Mr. St. George came up to her. He had been standing at the further end of the terrace alone. She turned round abruptly as he approached her, and said, with heightened colour and in a confused manner, ‘Mr. St. George, I beg your pardon for—for the croquet ground—what I said this morning; I am afraid I was rude; I felt so angry.’

Henry St. George was surprised at Miss Mitford for the second time that day.

In the morning he had been astonished at her warmth and extreme frankness; this evening he was still more astonished at the candour of her blunt apology.

'O, Miss Mitford,' he replied, 'how can you give it a moment's thought? All is fair in croquet; people say and do as they choose. I have no doubt unintentionally I gave you great provocation.'

'It was very provoking,' said Patty heartily; 'I am glad it was unintentional, although I am sorry to have been rude. I don't think I could have forgiven you, had you known what you were doing!'

'Your anger shall be a lesson,' answered her companion, amused; 'I will never do so again. Am I forgiven?' he inquired, offering her his hand.

'Mutually forgiven?' asked Patty, smiling frankly.

He held her hand in his, a tighter and a longer clasp than the occasion seemed to require.

The following morning Patty found on her plate at the breakfast-table a scarlet geranium. She did not require to be told who had placed it there; but she transferred it to the band of her dress, and from thence to the hat, where she wore it all day.

Each morning the same little attention was repeated.

It is not to be supposed from this that Henry St. George and Patty at once lost their hearts to each other. Nothing was further from the intention of either. 'A pretty, amusing, spirited little thing,' was his remark. And Patty, in her confidential conversations with Rose Melville at night, declared that he was the one man in the house she could not get on with—'He is so quiet, so self-possessed, and I am always saying something out of the way, slang or startling, to shock him; it is such fun, I feel that I must. Fernham and Hoare are a thousand times jollier!'

Patty would have scorned, as milk-and-water young ladyism, to have added 'Mr.' to the surnames of her acquaintances.

St. George, as he smoked his pipe at night in the billiard-room—for fine gentleman though he was, he did smoke a pipe at night—decided that he admired Mabel Grahame most of the three girls at Cranbourne; 'No doubt about it, she has style and manner; she could take her place anywhere;' and yet, after he had quite settled that question in his own mind, his thoughts would revert to his adversary at croquet, and dwell upon her.

She amused him, her outspoken anger amused him; her frank apology, her freedom of manner, and her slang expressions! what should he say to them? She was so unlike the girls he was accustomed to meet in London, so unlike his own high-bred sisters. Refined, elegant girls, with perfect composure and ease

of manner, never surprised into a hasty expression or a loud tone of voice ; he had seen among them fretfulness and selfishness, plenty of it, in a quiet way. What would such girls say to Patty Mitford ? How shocked would they be at her disregard of conventional proprieties, at her custom of saying exactly the thing she thought, and no other !

And how would Patty act under such circumstances ? Would she be a match for them ? Her petulance, her angry words, her frankness would be wasted upon them ; they would subdue, awe, silence her, by their composure, by a certain elevating of the eyebrows, and gazing unconscious upon their victim, more difficult to resist than the most fluent vocabulary of angry words.

Henry St. George amused himself by constant attempts to raise Patty's wrath, but he was unsuccessful ; she was too easy-tempered to be quickly roused.

Ten days elapsed—an even succession of pleasant sensations ; beautiful weather, tempting to outdoor life, lent its share to the enjoyment.

There were morning strolls on the terrace and bouquet-making before breakfast, letters, and desultory conversation succeeded by croquet ; before the game was ended they had begun to find it too hot for exertion, so they would adjourn to the shade of some fine old oak-tree, where Henry St. George would repeat some of his favourite pieces, varying as his mood might be, from Ingoldsby Legends to Tennyson's Idyls, or to some favourite Scotch ballad.

Luncheon-bell would summon them to the house ; and then some archery, a sail, a scramble over the rocks, or a walk to some ruin in the neighbourhood, would occupy their afternoon.

An evening spent in singing, and conversation, would close the day.

It was pleasant idling ; perhaps it was dangerous too ; for idleness, we are told, is the root of all evil.

St. George persisted to himself that Mabel was the girl he most admired, and yet it was at Patty's side that he was always to be seen ; and certainly Patty Mitford was the one his thoughts dwelt most upon when he was alone.

Their balls were always on the counter sides at croquet ; and with what vigour those small hands sent his ball to the opposite side of the ground ! What pleasure she found in sending him behind his ring ; worrying, catching, harrying him, until he never had a chance of becoming a rover !

She was always first at everything, with a strength and

energy which never seemed to flag. She would be the first to leap over a sunk fence, cross a five-barred gate, run headlong down the steep cliff leading to the shore, take the oar if they were out rowing, and keep up all the while a running fire of sarcasm on Mr. St. George for what she termed his London airs and graces.

He could tame her and calm her only in one way, when he began to repeat poetry to her ; then she would listen, and never weary of the tones of his voice, or of watching the varying expression with which he would repeat one ballad after another.

Ten days could not pass without an intervening Sunday—one day's check upon their amusements ; and yet the Sunday brought its own pleasures.

Most of the party preferred a two miles' walk, through park and wood, to church, to a drive in the Grahame family carriage. Henry St. George soon found himself walking near Patty, and they fell into quieter conversation than was usual with them. He began to talk about his London life, and Patty had to confess that she had never been to London.

'Never been to London !' He could not have believed there was a young lady in England, in these travelling days, who had never been to London. From London, they began to talk of his own home in Kent, the garden of England.

'This Sunday walk recalls Sunday walks in Kent to me, as long ago as when I was a school-boy ; but this one is far more pleasant,' he said, laughing ; 'I remember, my sisters and I, we used to quarrel all the way to church, and the French governess always sided with the girls ; you and I are amicable to-day for a wonder.'

'I always try to be good and demure one day in the seven,' replied Patty ; 'but tell me about your home, is it a pretty place ?'

'Very,' he said ; 'the park belongs to a cousin of my father's, an old man, who shows an immoderate love for the things of this life, by lingering here so long ; he is about ninety-five. We lived formerly in the dower house outside the park, now we live in London.'

'Do your sisters like living in London ?'

'Yes, they prefer it.'

'I should not : London must be slow.'

'That is the last epithet I should consider applicable to London,' he replied.

'But there can be no boating, cricketing—not even croquet ;

and riding in Rotten-row, in such a crowd, must be worse than no riding.'

'And yet London is full of amusements which young ladies generally prefer, to those you name.'

'I should not like it,' said Patty, decidedly. 'Do you think I should pull with your sisters, if I knew them?' she inquired, abruptly.

'No, I don't think you would.'

'Why?'

'I will describe to you my sisters, and you shall judge for yourself: they are both tall, dark, and very handsome;—are you that?'

'You know quite well,' she answered confidently, 'I'm small, fair, and very pretty.'

'I am the last man to deny it,' he replied. 'They are quiet, I may say languid, composed, well-read, and accomplished.'

'I have no acquired gifts,' said Patty; 'all I have are natural: and as to being so very quiet, I make a free use of the health and the spirits heaven has given me.'

'My sisters do nothing for themselves which any one else can do for them. Is that your way?'

'Certainly not,' replied Patty.

'I never heard either of my sisters raise their voices beyond a certain pitch; they never hurry their movements; their hair and their dress are never out of order; and,' he added, laughing, 'their gowns always have the proper sweep to the back.' This was said in allusion to a joke against Patty—that her gown never was tidy an hour after she came down stairs.

'Your sisters may be very good—better than I am,' said Patty, hotly, 'but I never wish to see them. I am certain I should not like them.'

'I made no comparisons,' said Mr. St. George, amused; 'I only state facts.'

'Is your mother like your sisters,—should I not like her?'

'Yes, I think you would like each other when you became acquainted,' he answered warmly. 'She is stately, but neither cold nor artificial; and she has composure and refinement without being selfish or indifferent.'

'And your sisters are so young, and yet have no lark about them,' continued Patty. 'I suppose,' she added, 'they would be horrified to let such a word as "lark" pass their lips.'

'They don't talk slang,' rejoined her companion; 'and, I must confess, I am glad they do not.'

‘And why, I should like to know?’ inquired Patty, sharply. ‘Why should men keep, for their exclusive use, all the best and jolliest words in the English vocabulary? It is a piece of selfishness to which I, for one, will never lend myself.’

‘Slang is associated in one’s mind with an absence of restraint: it is the natural expression of a rough sort of life, with which we wish our sisters and wives to have no connection. If women adopt men’s ways, at best they can only be a mild imitation; and our ideal women are not poor imitations of men—they are to be something far different.’

‘I really think you are giving me the sermon before the service commences,’ said Patty, petulantly.

‘You brought it on yourself,’ he replied.

They walked on in silence for a few minutes; the conversation had fallen into a strain not pleasant to Patty. At last she said—

‘Though I do maintain I can see no harm in slang, still, Mr. St. George, I am not content with myself. I often wish I was different.’

‘Do you?’ inquired her companion, who was rapidly beginning to think that her faults only made her more charming.

‘Yes. To begin with:—I am not half so good as Rose. I ought to educate myself in the way sermons and books tell one; and I do mean to do so; but it will be such a bore, and now I do enjoy myself; life is such jolly fun!’

They had reached the church-door, so Patty could not complete her confession.

Neither of the two attended much to the prayers in church.

Henry St. George lost himself in a reverie as to the comparative merits of art and nature, and ended by hoping that when he did marry—not that he had any thoughts of such an act at the present moment—he might find a frank true nature, one whom he could form and mould as he could wish,—one, in fact, like the young girl kneeling near him,—‘a diamond that I can polish and cut as I choose, not a diamond pared and polished until the stone is almost polished away.’

And Patty, kneeling near him, was resolving that she would be good, have more self-control; and, after all, if so many people objected to it, she would give up talking slang and trying to be fast. ‘I will talk no more about swells, larks, not call money “tin,” a shilling a “bob,” a joke a “jolly sell;” not say I am set upon, or I am up a tree. And may I not even call a fellow a “muff,” a “slow coach,” or a “brick,” as he may deserve?’

And Patty sighed deeply, to think that of her own free will she was renouncing all those most expressive words in the English language.

The twelfth of August dawned bright and beautiful, as every other morning had been, the last month. The ladies came down to the gentlemen's early breakfast, and Patty fastened a sprig of geranium into St. George's shooting-cap, wishing him good sport, before they started.

The day was dull at Cranbourne ; there was no fun in playing croquet when their adversaries were absent.

For the first time in his life the grouse-shooting afforded St. George no pleasure. His friends rallied him on his dulness, and he was wishing himself at Cranbourne.

The truth was, that at Cranbourne there was an attraction, which increased in strength day by day ; the more he endeavoured to resist, the more he felt himself drawn towards Patty Mitford.

She was beautiful, natural, artless ; every word she uttered was worth hearing ; the slang words he objected to in others were bewitching when they fell from her lips ; in fact, he was desperately in love, and all arguments of his calmer reason were unheeded.

Life, without Patty Mitford by his side, would be life not worth living. He must tell it to her, and the future—the future might take care of itself ; his passionate fancy could brook no opposition, could listen to no reason.

The Saturday following was a blank day, the gentlemen were not shooting. After luncheon, the whole party agreed to walk, by the sea-shore, to a small town about a mile distant. Mabel Grahame wanted some crochet cotton, which was quite indispensable to the completion of some work in which she was engaged. They sauntered on idly, joking and laughing together, one throwing stones into the sea, another drawing castles on the sand, or taking a shot with a stone at some sea-gull passing by, with a lazy sense of enjoyment.

Patty had discovered some seaweed, which she insisted was peculiar to this coast, and had rarely been seen before.

Mr. Fernham pretended to be of her opinion, and said he knew it as a rare specimen, 'it was a *Lycopodium maritimum felix*.' But here Rose interposed, and said she knew Mr. Fernham was taking advantage of their ignorance, Lycopodiums were not seaweeds. Mr. St. George joined in the laugh, and persisted in offering bits of kelp and seaweed to Patty, inquiring if they

were not also some rare, unknown specimen. Patty laughed, and replied that she was sorry her ignorance was as great as that of her companions, and glad that her discernment was greater.

Before they reached the little town, they paused for a few moments to admire the distant coast, which a receding rock opened to their view. Whilst they were so doing, Henry St. George came gently behind Patty, and fastened on to the end of her hat two long strips of green seaweed, which hung down her jacket, below her waist. They continued their walk. For some time none of her companions noticed her novel decorations. When they did so, an imploring glance from Mr. St. George prevented their betraying him.

Mabel entered the one shop Holmgate could boast; the shop which sold bacon and Berlin wool, tallow-dips and cheese, sweeping-brushes and cotton gowns; sold, in fact, everything except the one article the purchaser required, after the manner of shops in country towns. She found that it did not sell crochet-cotton; so their walk had been fruitless, and they began to retrace their steps.

Not fruitless so far as fun was concerned, for Patty's long streamers afforded great amusement. Unconscious Patty had stood at the carriage of the member's wife, making conversation, whilst Mabel was shopping; had walked down High-street, wondering why the people turned to stare at her as she passed.

'Look behind you!' cried out two lads more forward than their companions, as they came to the outskirts of the town; 'look behind you, miss!' Patty turned her head, and of course saw nothing.

'I really cannot stand this any longer,' said Rose, who had joined Mr. St. George; 'it is a great shame of us all!'

'What do those little urchins mean?' inquired Patty.

Mr. Fernham took hold of her long seaweed streamers. Patty mistook his meaning, and, shaking her head, exclaimed, 'No, no; you shall not fasten those on to me! Where have you hid them all this time?'

'On you,' exclaimed Rose, laughing.

'On me! Impossible! I have not been through Holmgate, talking to Mrs. Grey, with those absurd things hanging about me?'

'You have indeed,' said Rose, through her laughter.

'O, Rose, it was too much of a joke; how could you do it?'

'It was not me!' exclaimed Rose. 'Not me!' said Mabel and Mr. Fernham in one breath; whilst all eyes turned on Henry St. George.

‘Surely it was not you?’ said Patty, quite slowly.

‘Yes, it was,’ interposed Rose; ‘Mr. St. George did it before we went into the town; that has been our joke. I am nearly dead from suppressed laughter.’

Patty took no notice of Rose’s remark, but looking full at Henry St. George, she said, very measuredly, ‘I am surprised; I had thought differently of you.’

Her colour was heightened; she showed her anger in no other way, and walked on rapidly.

The whole party felt guilty; for Patty was seriously displeased. She prided herself on the way she could take a joke; and had it been Mr. Fernham who had thus decorated her hat, she would probably only have laughed, and ended the subject by saying, ‘What a shame! see if I don’t pay you out!’ Mr. St. George was already different in her eyes to any one else—she had not said so to herself; but she did, in fact, think little less of him than he thought of her.

With all the sensitiveness of a growing love, she thought, as she walked apart, ‘Had he liked me, as I fancied he did from his manner, he would have respected me; and had he respected me, he could never have suffered me to look ridiculous in the eyes of so many people, much less have made me so himself.’

She felt very injured, and could hardly restrain the rising tears; but she heard his steps approaching, and swallowed the tears she would not for worlds have had him discern.

St. George came up to her, to make his peace. He had fastened the seaweed on to her as an idle joke, but when he found how seriously she was annoyed, he wished the seaweed had been in its proper place, waving at the bottom of the sea, before it had tempted him to offend his lady-love.

‘Miss Mitford,’ he said, deprecatingly, ‘I trust you are not offended; it was the merest joke.’

‘O no; I am not offended,’ said Patty, with assumed dignity.

‘Our joking about Lycopodiums led me on,’ he said. ‘I am so sorry; I would not have done it on any account, had I thought you would mind.’

Patty made no reply. They walked on in silence for a few minutes.

‘Miss Mitford, do speak! tell me you are not vexed,’ said Mr. St. George. ‘If you are not angry, say we are friends, just as we were half an hour ago.’

‘No; we are not friends as we were half an hour ago,’ said Patty, turning round fiercely; ‘and never shall be again! I am

not angry ; I only find I was quite mistaken. I thought you were a very different man from what I find you : I should never have cared had Mr. Fernham chosen to do it ; but I judged you differently. I thought, too, that you liked me : you could not like me unless you respected me ; and had you had any respect for me, you could not have made me conspicuous to the eyes of so many. O no ! I am not angry,' she continued rapidly, with flashing eyes ; ' I only see that I have been quite mistaken. It does not signify in the least.'

' Miss Mitford !' exclaimed Henry St. George, quite aghast at such a flow of words, ' you have indeed misunderstood me. I had no notion you would have been offended, or I assure you I would never have done it. Don't say that you are mistaken : you are not ; you know the truth—you must know it !'

' What truth ?' interrupted Patty. ' This truth, I suppose ; that it is only my want of knowledge of the world which makes me resent what you have done ; it is the way of all men in society, to be attentive to a girl one moment, and the very next to turn round and ridicule her to the first person they happen to meet. Had I known more of the ways of the world, I should have expected nothing else. That is what you mean,' said Patty, ' is it not ?'

' Miss Mitford !' said Henry St. George, reproachfully. But Patty was too angry to hear reason.

She was unsophisticated in mind as in manners ; and, it must be confessed, she was warm in temper. Her thunderstorms were short in duration, and were usually succeeded by the brighter sunshine.

Patty seemed to be walking down her anger, for she did not speak again ; but it was with no measured step that she paced along the shore, kicking the little stones in front of her, until they had passed the turn which led into Cranbourne grounds.

Henry St. George followed : during the whole time he had been addressing her mentally. He could not endure to see her so angry ; and yet he thought it was not a bad sign for him. Anyhow, then and there he must tell her the truth, and gain permission some day to call her his wife. If she was impetuous, surely he was impetuous too.

' We have walked beyond the turn,' exclaimed Patty, abruptly ; she wheeled round. Certainly her movements lacked that repose which, his sisters would say, was the great characteristic of a lady.

' Stop, Miss Mitford !' said Henry St. George, ' you must not

go in until I have spoken. You have been hard upon me ; your own true instincts tell you that no man does other than honour the lady he loves. You are not unconscious—you cannot be—of the way in which I love you ; how dear everything belonging to you is to me. I would have cut off my right hand sooner than have made you angry, had I imagined you would have cared about it so much. Instead of saying we are never to be friends again, say—O Patty, you must say—that the time is at hand when you will love me, far more than you think you can now, in return for the way in which I will try to win that precious love !

No girl ever was more taken by surprise than was Patty, that eventful seventeenth of August.

She had no answer ready.

St. George took her hand. ‘O Patty! my true, first, deep love! I never knew half the value of life until I met you ; and now, I could not bear it, without the thought—the hope of you—as my guiding star! Whisper the one word, and all my life, all its strength, all its love, shall be spent to make you happy!’

Patty’s anger was gone. If he loved her, she could forgive him everything.

They sat down together on the beach ; and with no other witnesses than the ever-changing, never-ceasing roll of the waves—that common emblem of life—and the hard iron-gray stone of the overhanging rock, as an emblem of the iron rule of Fate—the two young lovers exchanged their vows of eternal love, and faith, and trust.

At the close of an hour, hallowed to them by mutual vows and promises, they rose to return to the house. Patty whispered to him, ‘How can you wish to have such a Tartar as I am for a wife!’ And he answered fondly,

‘I don’t know which I prefer, Patty angry, or Patty merry.’

‘O, so this is the end of the thunderstorm, is it?’ said Mr. Fernham, who had watched them walk up the cliff together, and addressed them, as Patty was making her escape, smiling and blushing, into the house.

The days were not long enough for Henry St. George and Patty to be happy ; the nights too short for the dreams of happiness they were to find on the morrow.

‘How will St. George senior like his favourite son to marry a clergyman’s daughter without a fortune?’ inquired Mr. Grahame of his wife.

‘St. George must know best,’ she returned ; ‘he is confi-

dent: surely he would never have engaged himself unless he knew how she would be welcomed?

'O, my dear,' replied her husband, 'St. George always was an impulsive fellow; he has fallen in love at first sight; he thinks it a matter of life and death: love is blind, hope fallacious, and all that sort of thing, you know.'

'It would be a selfish proceeding on his part,' returned Mrs. Grahame; 'but I like him too well to think such a thing possible. They may perhaps have sufficient of love's difficulties to enhance its victories; but it must end right at last.'

Henry St. George's father, his mother, and his two sisters were recruiting their health, after a London season, at the waters of Carlsbad; so that a week or more must elapse before an answer to his letter could be obtained.

He wrote his mother a glowing description of the beautiful, frank, ingenuous bride he had chosen for himself: 'She would be a youngest daughter to his mother, whom he begged, if needful, to smooth matters for him with his father.'

To his father he wrote, 'that he had met and won the woman who, of all women in England, was the one most suited to him; he only waited his father's sanction to be quite happy.'

Like themselves, she was of gentle blood; she belonged to the Mitfords of Mitford—as he knew, one of the oldest gentry names England could boast. He did not suppose she had much fortune; but they were content to wait until his father could give them a sufficient allowance; and when his father saw Patty, which he trusted would soon be the case, he would think, as his son did, that she was a fortune in herself.

Henry St. George would not have been very gratified had he been at Carlsbad, and heard the manner in which his communications were welcomed.

The letters once despatched, he troubled himself no more about the future; the present, the golden present, was what he lived for. The words which fell from Patty's lips, the bright glances which came from Patty's eyes, were the food his soul required.

They had one fortnight of unchequered joy, before the Treasury summoned St. George to his post. Public affairs wait neither for time, tide, love, nor for those foreign letters, which did not arrive.

The moonlight walks; the games of croquet—unlike what croquet games ever would be to either of them again; those hours seated on the cliff, where, surrounded by a merry party,

they had still felt alone with each other, because they held the key to each other's heart ; those hundred small joys were at an end. The hour of parting was at hand.

Patty felt no fears in looking forward to the parting. Mistrust, jealousy, doubt—those failings of small natures—were not her failings. Perhaps, too, she did not know life—did not know herself, and did not know the depth of human changeableness ; and therefore she felt no fear.

The evening before he left, they went together to the cave where he had first told her of his love.

He was gloomy ; he trembled at leaving his new-found treasure ; his mind pictured a thousand dangers which might arise. He made her repeat to him, again and again, that she loved him ; that she would be constant through trial, through absence, through whatever might come upon them.

'Constant !' she said ; 'Henry, do you suppose there is another Henry St. George for Patty Mitford in the whole world ? How can I help waiting ? If I love you, I cannot avoid waiting. Hope and castle-building are pleasant companions ; they will occupy me until you come to Grangeham.'

'But, Patty, if I am prevented coming to Grangeham, will you still not doubt me ?'

'I shall never doubt you,' she answered, 'until you give me too good reason ; and that I feel you will never do.'

There were more promises of eternal constancy ; more whispers to which the sea alone bore witness ; and then they parted.

A few happy tears glistened in Patty's eyes as the carriage drove from the door ; but what pain was there in parting, when the meeting would come again so soon ? She belonged to him ; he was hers : there was joy enough in that thought to support her through a worse parting ; and Patty went on to the lawn and enjoyed a game of croquet, bearing with great equanimity the chaff of her companions.

Care was heavy at the heart of St. George as he drove away ; he left his treasure, the very light of his eyes behind him. Perchance he feared himself—feared the influence of the world, to which he was returning ; but he said, with clenched hands, 'Nothing shall part us ! She shall be mine—mine through life. Death alone shall sever us !'

PART II.

THREE years had elapsed. Was it weal or woe they had brought to Patty? It might be weal—that was yet to be proved; but if it were weal, the good kernel had been covered by a hard and nauseous shell.

Patty was not at Cranbourne. She was standing in the morning-room of a pretty rectory in one of the midland counties. The room had an untidy, neglected appearance; there were traces of womanly occupation about; but everything was littered and undusted, as if for days no housemaid had entered there.

There were changes in Patty's appearance. Her countenance told that the three years which had passed over her head had not been uneventful years to her: they had left their indelible traces on her face. The budding beauty of eighteen had developed into a decidedly handsome woman. The wilful, playful defiance about her had grown into womanly determination; there was an indescribable look come over her face, which told that the character which her lover had been so anxious to form and mould as he thought fit was forming, was moulding—for good or ill as it might be, whether or no he had been the moulder.

Her dress was quiet, but scrupulously neat. There was far more softness in those blue eyes, fixed so earnestly on her companion, and drawing in eagerly each word that he uttered, than she had ever shown in days of yore.

Her companion was the country surgeon; he had for weeks been a constant visitor at Grangeham Rectory; for Patty's father was an aged man, and the illness from which he would never recover had summoned him to be in readiness for the great call which must shortly follow. It is said that, in a family, marriages always run in triplets, and that misfortunes never come singly; and so it had proved at Grangeham. That morning, whilst their anxiety had been at its height on Mr. Mitford's account, Mrs. Mitford, an English matron, in the full sense of the term, younger than her husband by many years, whose description might fairly be summed up by saying that she was fat, fair, and forty, had slipped, with a teacup in her hand, from the top of the stairs to the bottom; bump, bump, bump she descended, with a noise resounding through the house like so many claps of distant thunder, till she reached the foot of the stairs, and lay there insensible. When she was raised up and conveyed to

bed, the doctor, who happened to be on the spot, pronounced that her shoulder was dislocated and her arm broken.

The doctor was a family friend, the safe receptacle of the family sorrows and family secrets of all the houses within a circuit of several miles. He had introduced Patty into the world, and had watched with fatherly interest the twenty-one years' progress she had made in her journey. In the days when Patty Mitford was the tomboy of the country; when her mother sighed over her utter disregard of female accomplishments; when the strict governesses fought shy of her society for their well-trained pupils; and later on, when Patty certainly did affect to be fast, indulged in slang, and chose her companions from the cricket-ground sooner than the ladies' drawing-room, the old doctor shook his head at the blame she incurred, and said, 'Ah, well, there's stuff in her; wait and see.'

And assuredly, though the doctor was a good man and a safe man, could he have had under his hands, on a bed of sickness, those who had brought the cloud over Patty's face, and subdued her ways, they would have received no gentle treatment from him—they would have suffered, even though they had not died.

'Will the resetting cause my mother great pain?' inquired Patty anxiously of the doctor.

'Well, my dear, no doubt it is very painful; short and severe; it will soon be over.'

'Mother can bear pain so badly!' said Patty.

'Broken bones must be set,' he replied. 'Do you run up to the hall,' he said coaxingly; 'your father wants some grapes: you have provided everything I need; I will have in the coachman and the gardener to hold your mother, and before you return it will be all done.'

Patty shook her head.

'Impossible,' she answered; 'I must be near my mother, not leave her alone to your tender mercies: I will hold her head.'

'You're a plucky little thing,' he said, with the familiarity of an old friend, 'but you have not nerve enough for that. At the moment she screams most, and is in the greatest pain, your hold must be most firm; you will be getting soft-hearted, and it will all have to be done over again.'

'I can trust myself,' said Patty firmly; 'let us go to it at once.'

The coachman was at hand; the gardener could not be found.

'Very unfortunate!' grumbled the doctor; 'every moment is of consequence.'

'I am afraid he is gone to the market-town, and will not return for an hour,' remarked Patty.

'We are in no state for spiritual consolation here !' exclaimed the doctor, as the curate of Grangeham was announced ; 'our temporal perplexities are too great, and must be attended to first.'

'From what I have just heard, Mrs. Mitford must be much hurt,' said the young clergyman, turning to Miss Mitford.

'Give us a practical illustration of the merits of muscular Christianity,' interrupted the doctor ; 'Mrs. Mitford's shoulder must be put in, and the arm must be set at once ; I must have another man to hold her ; will you do it ?'

'I have never seen a bone set,' he replied ; 'can you get no one else ?'

'You're strong enough,' said the doctor, 'if you have the nerve ; but come along—you must ; Miss Mitford will set you the example.'

'Certainly, if I can be of any use.'

They had a dreadful scene in the sick-room.

Mrs. Mitford was one of those soft, pliant natures who have no courage, no power of endurance in them ; it was a marvel how she had ever passed through the common ailments of life ; it was not from her that Patty Mitford had inherited her nature. At the sight of the coachman and the doctor, violent fear took possession of her. Patty's reassuring voice had no influence upon her ; and it was only by brute force that the painful operation could be performed.

Patty did her part bravely ; but, as scream upon scream issued from her mother, and her whole strength was employed to keep her mother's head quiet, every particle of colour fled from her face, and the blood trickled down from the lip, which she had bitten in the effort she made to control herself.

The double setting was over. The invalid lay exhausted by her own screams. The doctor wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and muttered to himself :

'It would have been an easier job to have set the bones of half a dozen men !'

The clergyman followed Patty downstairs, and poured out a glass of cold water for her. She looked very white as he said :

'You have a great deal of nerve : few daughters could have endured to assist at such suffering as you have witnessed to-day.'

'I could not have done it for any one except my mother,' answered Patty.

A few more words passed ; for this was Patty and the clergyman's first meeting. He was the new curate just arrived to take the sole charge. The doctor came downstairs ; and clergyman and doctor left the house together.

'Miss Mitford is very brave for so young a girl,' remarked the clergyman. 'I was watching her countenance in the sick-room.'

'She is a stunning girl !' replied the doctor, in a tone which challenged no denial.

Patty leant against the table ; the autumn sun was pouring its evening rays into the room.

'It is the 17th of August,' she thought to herself wearily. 'I would like just one half-hour to myself for thought.'

'Please, ma'am, master's bell has rung three times ; but as you were with the missus, I did not like to tell you before.'

'I will come this minute,' answered Patty ; and she hastened to another sick-room—the sick-room of her father, which was her habitual abode.

'How long you have been away !' said her father complainingly.

'Yes, dear papa ; I had to be with mother ; she is hurt by a fall. Have you wanted me ?'

'It is hot, and I am so weary,' said the invalid fretfully, throwing his hands about.

Patty offered him some cooling beverage to drink, straightened the sheets, smoothed his tumbled pillows, and then kissing his forehead, she said :

'Now, what shall I read ?'

'God bless you, darling !' he murmured. The fact was, he could not bear her out of his sight, and he had required nothing but her presence. 'Don't read,' he said ; 'repeat something to me.'

'I only know one kind of poetry,' she answered ; but she sat down, held his hand in hers, and began repeating, in a low voice, one simple Scotch song after another ; she varied them with scraps from Tennyson's *Idyls*. The old man was soothed at once : after she had been repeating for a few minutes, he cried :

'My dear child, I think a psalm or hymn would be more suited to me, lying on a death-bed, than those bits that you like to say ; but I don't know how it is, your voice is sweeter when you say what you like yourself than when you say what I choose.'

'You see,' said Patty merrily, 'I neglected my education in

all good things, so I don't know the things that you like ; but it does not signify ; I know you listen to the sound of the voice, not to the sense of the words.'

She went on again, for she wanted him to fall asleep, which he soon did ; then Patty rose quietly, and left the room.

'Call me, if my father should wake,' she said to the maid outside the door ; 'I am going into the garden for a short time.'

'Please, ma'am, Mary Jackson has been here ; she wanted to see the missus, but I told her she could not ; so she left a bottle, and wanted to beg for some port-wine ; missus had promised it to her, she said. She wanted to know, as missus could not, if you would walk up there this evening, after eight o'clock.'

'To think of any one, hating work as I do,' said Patty to herself, 'having so much forced upon them ! Leave me the bottle, Mary ; I will fill it, and take it to the Jacksons myself.'

And then she tied on her hat, and stepped out into the garden. She stooped down at the geranium-bed, and picked a sprig of the scarlet flower and fastened it into her band, whilst she muttered angrily,

'How can I be such a fool ! But it is the 17th of August, and I don't feel like myself to-day.'

She went to a shady seat at the end of the garden, where she could hear and yet not be seen, and drew from her pocket a letter, which was crumpled, crushed, and bore signs of having been often read. She read it again and again, and all she said was,

'How could he ? how could he ? he did love me once !—I know he did !'

And what was it that had made this great change in Patty's life ? Her love was not dead. She did not sorrow with the calm and softening sorrow that those feel who have been divided by death from those they love. He had not been false to her, won her love when he already loved another ? No ; he had only been the weak puppet of untoward circumstances. And all those men and women who can lay their hands upon their hearts, and can say that they chose love, the true union of heart to heart, soul to soul—that one undivided love which is typified by the love of the Church to her Head—without being influenced unduly by connections, money, and position, may step forward and throw the stones at Henry St. George which Patty at one time felt that she could have thrown at him in her anger and scorn.

But she was in far softer mood that night. When Patty had returned to her own home, after parting from Mr. St. George at Cranbourne, for some time all had been bright and smiling. Her parents were pleased at her engagement ; she enjoyed the congratulations and importance of a *fiancée*. But the pleasure beyond all other pleasures was the daily letter, in which Henry lamented his separation, spoke of their future together, and filled sheets with sweet nothings, which were delightful to her, but would not bear the criticisms of a third person. Her letters came daily, and she only replied to them when she felt inclined. After some delay, St. George's father wrote from Carlsbad : 'It did not interest him to hear about his son's foolish love-affairs ; he might fall in love, and out again, as often as he chose. As to an engagement, the idea, at his age, was absurd ; and a marriage, with his prospects, would be ridiculous. He did not care to hear anything more about it at present, as he had gone to Carlsbad for peace, and not to be pursued by home worries ; in that case he might as well have remained at home. He trusted that his son would have forgotten this foolish affair ere he returned home ; but if he had not, it would be time enough to talk of it then.'

St. George did not mention this letter to Patty. He spent his Sundays constantly at Grangeham, and they enjoyed their fool's paradise. Patty felt that if she had engaged herself to him, without really knowing much of him, she was now giving her heart to him daily more and more.

When he departed by the Sunday evening train, and she opened the locket he had given her with his likeness in it, to have another look at the image, the original having left her, she gave it a sort of internal hug, and said, 'He is such a jolly brick ! he is first-rate !' She could not bring herself to the young-ladyism of saying, 'He is so nice, or he is such a darling,' though she knew that he would have preferred it.

Mr. St. George and family had arrived in London from Carlsbad, so announced the *Morning Post*. Henry read the announcement, and hastened to Clarges-street with radiant face, although his heart beat more rapidly than was usual.

He did not anticipate the thunderstorm which broke over his head. His father would not hear of an engagement. What would he marry upon ? Were his ways and habits those of a man who could maintain a wife on 500*l.* a year ? he asked sneeringly. Henry owned they were not ; but Patty and he were content to wait until his father could allow them more. Henry

argued, pleaded, and insisted that nothing on earth should separate him from her whom he had sworn to love.

Finally, his father appeared to relent. Whilst saying that Henry was too young to engage himself, he agreed that if his son would give him his word never to meet the young lady, nor to write to her for two years, he would that day two years give the matter his best consideration, and see what he could do for them, should they still be of the same mind. Henry could make no better terms; he was compelled to subscribe to those his father dictated; and it was with a heavy heart that he went down to Grangeham to spend his last Sunday with Patty.

At first Patty was indignant; she did not wish to enter a family who were prepared to receive her so ungraciously. She was a lady by birth; there had been Mitfords generations before there had ever been St. Georges. She released Henry from his engagement to her; he was free, welcome to leave her that moment. But he reasoned with her; and when her anger cooled, she saw that, after all, Henry and she would be the sufferers if they did part, and she would be doing the very thing Henry's father was desirous they should do. No; two years could not last for ever. They paced up and down the shady walks of the rectory garden, saying last words, giving confident promises and pledges to each other. Patty vowed her thoughts would always be in London; he vowed his thoughts would always be in Grangeham—he never could be unconscious of her. Though he was in the midst of a crowd, in the whirl of London life, his heart would hold communion with her. If he looked into an opera-box, or gazed into the carriages in the Park, it would only be to see if there were any one else in the world who had the same deep-blue eyes which his Patty possessed.

They parted, and Patty shed more tears than she had shed the first time that he left. But there was so much hope to gild her future, and her faith in him and in his constancy was so strong, that her eyes soon lost their dimness.

Their social worlds were different; they heard nothing of each other. Sometimes Rose Melville would write to Patty, and say where she had seen him; but they were scrupulously honourable, and held no intercourse with each other. He was in the full whirl of a London season; his unoccupied hours were spent in the luxuriousness of his club, those enemies of domestic life, but his heart was with Patty, and thoughts of her were the key-note to his daily life.

Thus two years elapsed. Patty was impatient, and struggled,

as a bird against the bars of its cage, against the stagnation of her life ; but she had hope and unbounded faith to cheer her through her two years' solitude, and the increasing illness of her father was a constant occupation to her time. She read, in the lady's sheet of the *Times*, the announcement of the death of the aged cousin whom Henry had spoken of as clinging too fondly to the things of this world, and she knew that poverty would no longer be the bar to keep them asunder. Her heart bounded to think how nearly the two years of trial were at an end.

His name was constantly among the distinguished guests of some great ball or party of the season. There were kind friends in her neighbourhood who would remark, in a casual way, 'What a delightful family were the St. Georges ! How universally Henry St. George was admired ! Lady So-and-so would gladly welcome him as her son-in-law. It was a likely thing ; he was always to be found near Lady Victoria, such a sweetly pretty girl she was ; and then, too, she had such a nice little fortune !'

Every pulse in Patty's frame would beat to double-quick time when she heard such remarks ; but though the darts might strike, they did not pierce deep. She had his own words. What could there be more true than the words of such a one as he ? The two years had passed ; Patty read to her father, walked with him, and joked with him, for, though infirm, the death-stroke had not yet befallen him ; but her ears were quickened ; she was restless ; for each time the rectory-gate clicked, or the door-bell rang, she expected that it was her lover, who was come to claim her for his own, to tell her that love and constancy had triumphed over every difficulty. Such would have been poetical justice ; but in real life it fell otherwise ; for Patty watched, and listened, and hoped, and scorned the thought of doubt, but her lover never came.

He, meanwhile, was in London, sorely perplexed and troubled in mind ; he had been much in Lady Victoria's society ; circumstances seemed to throw them together ; but he thought and dreamt of Patty. He was hearing constantly of Lady Victoria's charms, her connections, her money ; and he found himself always comparing her and her surroundings with the rectory, and its inhabitants at Grangeham. As the two years' probation drew to a close, he often found himself wishing that Patty had some money. Unless his father really did something handsome for them, how could they live in London as he had been accustomed to live ? He wondered how she had occupied herself these two years : had she tried to improve herself ? Of course she was a

thorough lady; still he wondered whether she would take a proper place amongst all his people. Society was made up of so many small conventionalities, it required a lifetime to learn them. No doubt he had done a hasty thing, still he meant to go through with it. He loved her far too dearly, and so on.

The two years had elapsed. Days passed: he could not make an opportunity to speak to his father: they were all together at their country house. Lady Victoria was staying there also, as his sister's friend. He had been riding with her in the morning; she had rallied him on his silence and gloom all the day. He had been thinking on what he owed to Patty; that night he must speak to his father. The conversation with his father was at an end; there had been no angry words. His father had begun by saying that he could give him only a very small allowance; that, though apparently so much wealthier, his affairs were involved; and if, under those circumstances, he would take the burden of a wife, the folly must be upon his own head. Then his father reasoned with him, pointed out to him the haste and the folly of what he had done, drew a picture of what his sacrifices must be, if he persisted in marrying this girl. Placed side by side—pleasant chambers in London; friends to drop in and smoke with him at times; the ease, the luxury, the good dinners of a club; the *entrée* to the pleasantest houses in London; a stall at the Opera; the enjoyment of having his own horse to ride,—all these were necessities of life to him; marriage with this love of his, would debar him from most of them: and Mr. St. George drew a picture of a small house, beyond the hallowed precincts of Belgravia; an untidy maidservant to answer the bell; cold joints for his dinner at least twice in the week, and constant discussion how the servants' beer is to be reduced, or money found for the baker, who said he would call this morning. 'Believe me,' said the old man, winding up his graphic picture, 'the loveliest Phyllis would soon lose her charms under such circumstances; domestic felicity is all very well, but I have seen no domestic felicity that could counterbalance pressing duns, increasing expenses, and diminishing resources. Please yourself,' he added, shrugging his shoulders as he rose from his wine, and adjourned to the drawing-room.

He had cut off the supplies, and his last words were a mockery. His graphic picture had told on a mind prepared to receive it.

Henry St. George allowed Lady Victoria to talk to him all the evening; and when he went to his room, he wrote a letter

—the letter which Patty held in her hand, crumpled and half torn. He thought he was very miserable, but he was not; absence had cooled his love; and the difficulties seemed insurmountable.

He did not do it without a pang, nor without a thought of the pain he was causing those deep blue eyes he had praised so often. 'As all is at an end between us, there must be no warm expressions in this letter,' he said, and he repressed those that rose to his mind.

It was a very cold letter that Patty received, stating the bare fact that he released her from her engagement. Two years had now elapsed; he had besought his father to consent to their union; but his decided refusal left him no hope of ever being able to claim her as his own. He trusted that she would soon forget him, and find happiness in some one more worthy of her than he was, &c. &c.

Patty would not at first believe that letter came from him, it was so much more cruel than anything she had expected. Then she compared it with others he had written to her, only two years ago. 'My love, my life, yours till death, yours for a long eternity,' and so many other words they contained, written by the same hand which had begun, 'My dear Patty,' as he might have begun to any stranger! 'He had ceased to love her! ceased to think of her! he was glad of his father's opposition!' The bitterness of those thoughts to Patty! In the first hours she felt as though her heart must break, from a blow so stunning, so fatal, to all the hope and faith in her nature.

She went with her new grief into the garden, there to do battle with it alone. Very bitter and very angry were the tears which forced themselves from her eyes, as she recalled all that had passed between them. 'He releases me from our engagement,' she thought bitterly; 'he need not have feared; one letter from him would have shown me that he had changed, and I should have hastened to loosen his unwilling fetters!'

And yet again she could not believe the evidence of her own eyes. During the few hours she had spent in the garden, she felt as though she lived through years of feeling. She gave the letter to her mother; but her pity, and the condolences she offered, were insupportable to her.

'Mamma, I can't stand being pitied; I can't bear to hear it all talked about; he has changed his mind, that's all. Please don't say anything about it to me, and as little to other people as you can.'

Her mother obeyed her wishes, but made up her mind that Patty was devoid of feeling. Had she seen Patty alone in her room, fighting unaided with the sorrow she could not help feeling, she would have thought differently. Anger at him for his weakness and his false promises, anger at herself for trusting him, and for sorrowing for him, now that he had proved himself unworthy, were her chief feelings; for he *had* proved himself unworthy, he had bartered his love for his ease!

She had in those hours of bitter solitude her lesson to learn. She had never known a will stronger than her own; and now the iron will of circumstances was teaching their unwilling pupil the lesson, that none are free to hold their lot in their own hands, and that submission is required of all.

One moment she hoped she might never meet him, see him again; another time she longed to see him,—in a crowd, at a ball, to go up to him, to look at him fearlessly, and ask him how he had dared act towards her as he had done. Then, again, she was only a young girl, and her heart was very sore, though she meant to be so proud, and she found relief in floods of tears, and sobs, with her head buried in her pillows. For it was only in her bedroom, with locked doors, that she held these struggles with herself. Help came to Patty in her first great trouble; for the Power that had undertaken to train her nature was merciful in his discipline; she did not recognise it as help, but it softened her, and took her out of herself.

Her invalid father had a stroke, and became bedridden. He loved her as the darling of his old age, and could scarcely bear her from his sight, and Patty was a nurse by nature. The old man watched her movements about the room, though he had no words at command to express his praise; the music of her voice soothed him, though he could not gather the sense of her words; she watched each little symptom; she fed him herself; she could make his pillows comfortable, move him, heavy man though he was, more to his liking than any one else could. A thousand little tender offices she performed for him; she loved to do them; and he, with the caprice of an invalid, scarce suffered any one else to be near him by day than her.

Hour after hour she sat by his bedside stroking his head gently, her thoughts partly with him, partly imagining to herself the Park with its gay equipages, as Henry St. George had described them to her, and he seated in one of them, whispering the same soft words to the Lady Victoria she had heard about, that two years ago he had whispered in Cranbourne caves to her.

It was almost a happy day to her, the day she saw her father in his bath chair, suffering himself to be wheeled about the garden, and enjoying the sunshine, which would so soon shine on him no more. The doctor found them together.

'Proud of your handiwork, no doubt?' he inquired of Patty.

'My handiwork! rather yours.'

'No, no!' he replied, 'he's past my doctoring; loving thoughts, tender cares keep the faint spark of life a while longer. I have been in many homes; and when I have seen the senseless, selfish, helpless wives wearing the life out of a patient husband, I have said, "Heaven be thanked I never laid such a burden as that on my back!" Still I ask but one thing of Providence, that I may die in harness; have no long sickness: it is the loneliest of all the world's loneliness, an old man on a bed of sickness without any one to tend him!'

'That can never be your lot,' answered Patty; 'I will come to you; you are an old father to me, and I will nurse you.'

'You will have others: when the time comes, it will be "prior claims."'

'No, indeed, I shall not,' said Patty earnestly.

He shook his head and laughed.

'You don't know,' said Patty; 'I shall be ready to nurse.'

'I know this much,' answered the doctor; 'the man who had "nous" enough to love you, and hadn't pluck enough to stick to you, was a fool, and I wish him no greater enemy than himself.'

Patty's face flushed, but she gave no answer; she might blame him, she could not bear that others should do so.

'Ah, well,' said the old doctor, 'the wound is not skinned over yet, I see: don't you examine it too much; to be always thinking of your complaint is a bad sign.'

'The wound is not very bad, I can assure you,' said Patty, hotly; 'it is just this, we did like each other, but we'—she winced as she said 'we'—'we have changed our minds. I dare say he is already engaged to some one he prefers, and I—I shall marry as soon—as soon as I am ready—when I have time.'

'I thought you would always be in readiness to nurse me,' remarked the doctor drily. 'Well, there is one thing I see, he has not taken all the spirit out of you. You have been so quiet of late, I thought it was all gone, but you're a bit of a Tartar yet!'

Patty laughed, as the old man intended she should do. If there was one thing in the world that dry, hard-headed old

Scotchman loved, it was Patty Mitford. And thus in constant attendance upon her father, and with little intercourse with the outer world, a year passed, and the first bitterness of her trouble had worn off. Her pride, and the strange resolve she had made to drive him from her thoughts, had been a great help to her. But the evening of the day when her mother's broken arm had to be set, all seemed to come back to her in full force; it had been a fatiguing day. Then, too, it was the third anniversary of the day upon which she had been engaged to him—that day on which so many bright promises had dawned, all to end in disappointment!

She read over the first letter he had written to her after their separation, and the last cruel letter she had received from him; and many hot tears fell upon them. At last she laid her hot and tired head upon the turf where she was seated, and sighed to herself, like another Enone, 'O mother earth, take me; for I am very weary!' He had been in the habit of repeating Enone's lament to her, in so touching a voice!

The voice of that wearisome maid sounded from indoors, 'Miss Patty, Miss Patty, you're wanted!'

She rose quickly, already ashamed of her faintheartedness. Was this all the spirit, all the courage she could show?

'Please, miss, Jacksons have been up again for the wine,—the father is taken worse: and please, miss, master's bell has rung. Missis is all right, the nurse is with her.'

'My life is no better than a treadmill; so come, you old horse, go round your wheel,' muttered Patty, as she started to search for the cellar-key.

It was the last time that Patty ever shed tears over her lover's letters; her father had another stroke that night, and she forgot all besides, in her watching by the slow deathbed.

She left her mother to the care of the nurse, whilst she remained with her father. During a fortnight he lingered unconscious, the doctor and the young clergyman were daily visitors; but Patty heeded neither: it seemed as if all the love of her nature had centered on this deathbed, and she must struggle hard to cheat Death of its prey.

Who ever won in that struggle, however fair the flower to be rescued, however loved the life to be preserved?

And this time Death had laid his seal on an old man, full of years and honour; for it was the life of a good man that was drawing to its close. His life had been a living sermon to his parish and to his household; and the faith and the humility of

their pastor would bear fruit when he was sleeping the sleep of the just.

Consciousness returned to him one morning at early dawn. Patty happened to be up and at his bedside; she slept in his room; he knew her, took her hand, looked round the room as if in search of his wife. 'Mamma is sleeping in the spare room,' said Patty, with a thrill of joy that he was conscious.

He drew her towards him, as if he wished her to kiss him, which she did several times. She raised herself at last, fearing that she was tiring him; but he drew her towards him, and in the words with which the patriarchs of old blessed their sons, he blessed her solemnly, in her coming in, in her going out for evermore. Almost before the sound of the words had died from his lips, his features became fixed, his eyes brightened as if it were a vision from the invisible world which greeted them, and the loved spirit was fled.

Patty was ill: 'It was no wonder,' said the doctor, 'overwrought—strength too severely tried,—on her nerves,—nature will have her revenge,—change of air, and peace, will do her good.' The rectory had to be vacated. All the sad farewells had to be gone through; the new incumbent was this muscular parson, as the doctor insisted upon calling him; and the doctor and the parson vied with each other in delicate considerations for the two ladies. The young clergyman was so afraid of distressing them, one would have supposed he wished them never to leave the rectory. He was with them daily, and constantly devising some little plan for Patty's benefit. Her illness only showed itself in being listless and weak, and in a constant desire to be left alone.

'So you leave us to-morrow,' grunted the old doctor, as he entered unannounced into the drawing-room of the rectory. It looked desolate and unfurnished. Patty had drawn a chair close to the fire, and was seated with her feet on the fender, gazing into the dying embers. She looked very desolate in her deep mourning, and she felt very alone in the world.

'You will be sure to like Hastings,' said the doctor; 'and let me hear that you are strong again, in a month.'

'I don't feel as if I should ever be strong again,' sighed Patty.

'My dear child,' said the old man, taking one of her hands, 'preaching is not my trade: if you'd listen, I suspect the young fellow would preach you a better sermon than I can. This illness of yours is just this: you had a trouble, and more people

have troubles than there are that have none; you would not feel it; you'd crush it alone. You gave it no outlet, so it's made itself one. Your strength and your spirits will come back with sea air; you've had to bear three hardish things, for leaving Grangeham is surely one; but there are many happy days awaiting you yet.'

'I had my happiness first; now it is all trouble.'

'Not you; you've just had a taste of what's in store for you. Well, I must be off to my wife, that means my cat.' He came back as he was at the door, and said confidentially, 'I got over my love-troubles early in life; but I burnt my fingers so badly, I never dared touch the fire again. Don't you do that; go to the fire again; but look what you're about when you do. Good-bye, God bless you!' He reached out his hand, but Patty jumped from her seat, and kissed him affectionately.

PART III.

THREE more winters had passed over Patty's head. Three more summers, with all their pleasant enjoyments, had come and were gone; it was autumn once more. Patty was standing before the cheval glass in her own room, taking a last look to see that her dress was all that it ought to be before she started with her mother to join a large pic-nic party to a favourite spot on the Welsh coast, some miles distant.

She bore little resemblance to the Patty who had left Grangeham three years ago; more to the one who had played croquet at Cranbourne six years since. She was the same Patty Mitford, and yet she was changed. She had matured from the wild girl into the handsome woman. She was as smiling, frank-looking, and bright as she had been six years ago; there was more of gentleness than of defiance in the expression of her blue eyes; and her manner was less that of some one bent on amusing themselves, and more that of a person accustomed to study other's wishes, than it had been in days of old. However much Patty had suffered in body or mind; however weary the days had been, or however long some wakeful nights had seemed to drag; however hard the uprooting of old ties and associates had been; and however difficult the forming of new ones might have proved,—that was at an end now, and Patty looked, as she felt, in her

pretty white muslin dress trimmed with blue ribbons, and her little white hat ornamented with natural flowers, happy, and ready to enjoy herself.

'My dear, we shall be late,' said her mother, bustling into the room, ready dressed, to do her part as chaperone to her daughter.

'Is the carriage round? I am ready,' answered Patty; and the two ladies went down stairs.

As they proceeded to their destination, they exchanged sundry remarks.

'It is to be a large pic-nic,' said Patty. 'Mrs. Rawdon told me that as many as seventy people would be there. I wonder if we shall meet any people that we know, and do not expect to see.'

'I daresay,' answered her mother.

'I wish the dear old doctor had not left us yesterday,' said Patty; 'what fun it would have been, having him with us!'

'Indeed, my dear, he is very well in his way, but not presentable at such a party as we shall meet to-day.'

'Such honour, uprightness, and truth as his ought to be presentable anywhere,' answered Patty testily.

'Ought to be, if you like,' replied her mother, 'but it is not.'

Mrs. Mitford and her daughter had chosen a pretty sea-bathing place in South Wales as their home when they left Grangeham, and there Patty had regained her health, and formed new friends. The old doctor came to see them, and the young clergyman often found his way there. As Patty became stronger, she seemed to find much pleasure in rallying him, and in quarrelling with him, much to her mother's distress; for Mrs. Mitford had had hopes, but Patty's manner dispelled them.

'It is too trying,' said Mrs. Mitford. 'Patty will never marry; she actually seems to dislike all the young men we meet, except him, and with him she is always quarrelling. It will be too bad if she never has a home of her own at all, and all because of that wicked young man; for I do call it wicked to change your mind, under certain circumstances.'

'O, Mr. Paget, what an unexpected pleasure!' exclaimed the old lady, as their carriage stopped at the gate which admitted the invited party into the grounds of the ruined castle near the sea, where the pic-nic was to be held. 'How came you here?'

'I had an invitation; and hearing from the doctor whom I

should meet if I did come, I accepted it,' answered the young rector of Grangeham.

It would be difficult to say to what party he had originally belonged, for he joined himself to the Mitfords, and remained with them the chief part of the day.

Fred Paget, the young rector of Grangeham, whom the doctor would only call 'our muscular parson of Grangeham,' was a pleasant gentleman-like young man. He was very good-looking on a large scale, strong and active; he wore a clerical beard, soft and silky enough to be an object of envy to all youthful aspirants to that manly ornament; he was an earnest parish clergyman, popular in the pulpit, popular at the cricket-club, popular at all diocesan meetings, patronised by the village oracle, the doctor, by whom he was even thought worthy of Patty Mitford, and with whom Fred Paget was, and had been for some time, much in love.

He had watched her now for four years with growing affection; he meant to be sure of his ground before he took the leap. Of course he had known every circumstance of her former life—there were plenty of people to give him that information—he had watched her at her father's death-bed, he had seen her daily during her ill-health, he had constantly seen her at her new home, and now he thought the time had come to try his fate.

The dinner was spread on the grass under the shadow of large elm-trees; they sat down upwards of fifty people. There were some people there whom every one knew, and there were some people there whom no one seemed to know; but the weather was favourable, and the party were very merry. Every one who was acquainted with Miss Mitford, agreed they had never seen her in better looks nor in better spirits. Fred Paget felt more convinced than ever that such a treasure must be secured ere some one else stepped in and won his prize.

The pic-nic party, after dinner, sauntered about in twos and threes, as is the custom at pic-nics. Some explored the ruins; some clambered about the rocks; some searched for wild flowers and ferns; and some strolled into the woods. Of the latter number were Patty and Fred Paget. He had succeeded in dividing her from the remainder of the party; the opportunity must not be lost, it might soon be at an end. He asked her quite abruptly, 'Could she care for him? Would she share with him her old home, Grangeham Rectory?' Before she could reply, he went on speaking. He assured her his affection was no hasty thing; he had known her, watched her, loved her for four years; he had

waited, and waited until now ; she knew him well, just as he was, but she could not know how deeply her image was impressed upon his heart.

Patty's heart beat quickly, but she felt as if she could not make an answer. True, it did not take her by surprise ; for she had for some time felt these words must come from Mr. Paget some day.

‘Do you know the past?’ she said slowly.

‘Of course I do,’ he replied ; ‘there is nothing that any one could tell me about you that I do not know. O, Miss Mitford, I have given you four years’ faithful service ; I wished for you to be my wife since that first day I saw you at your mother’s bed. I said to myself, when your father died, the love of such a daughter is worth any pains in the winning ; and I have nursed my hope ever since. Grangeham is unchanged : I wished you to return to your home as you left it, only instead of being unhappy, come back as happy as human love can make you.’

Patty gave no answer.

He placed his arm on hers and stopped her ; then looking into her face he said :

‘Miss Mitford, these words of mine cannot have surprised you ; I want to hear you say that you will give me your heart at Grangeham as well as your presence.’

Patty reached her hand to him, and laid it in his, and he was quite content.

‘Does the doctor know this?’ were Patty’s first words.

‘He met me at the station this morning, and said, “God speed, old fellow !” I read in his face that he guessed my errand.’

There was much to be told. Patty related the whole course of her engagement to Mr. St. George ; she spoke of it fully, as she had never been able to speak of it before ; but she owned that the last sparks of feeling towards him had died out, when she read in the paper the announcement of his marriage, a year ago, to Lady Victoria Powyss.

They sauntered on unconsciously for some time, until they emerged from the wood, and found themselves not far distant from the elm-trees, where the whole party had dined.

‘It is getting late,’ exclaimed Patty, awaking to the consciousness that she had been absent from her mother upwards of two hours ; ‘I wonder where mamma is ? Do you know, I think if you will go and find her, and bring her here, I will wait on this seat till you return. You have said so much these two hours, I should like to reflect upon it, whilst you are away.’

Fred Paget had secured his treasure ; he was quite satisfied that he had now obtained the last crowning ornament to take to Grangeham, and make his home a perfect paradise on earth ; he turned away with buoyant step to seek Mrs. Mitford, and impart to her his news ; he felt no fear as to the reception he should meet from her. Patty was calmly, quietly happy,—her heart was at rest ; she was thoroughly attached to Fred Paget, thoroughly at her ease with him. The seat where he had left her was in a quiet spot, surrounded on three sides by trees, and looking out from the top of the cliffs on to the open blue sea. She heard the hum of voices, and the sound of laughter in the distance, but they did not approach her ; nothing interrupted the pleasant current of her thoughts, except the voices of birds, crickets, and the numbers of young hares and rabbits that gambolled about, enjoying the declining day. One young girlish-looking figure was walking close to the cliff-edge intent on wild flowers ; but she was at least twenty yards from her, and never even raised her eyes from the ground where she was walking. A man, who appeared to be a coastguard, walked past, and addressed the young lady ; Patty thought he was warning her not to walk so near the edge of the cliff ; the girl looked up and thanked him, and Patty distinguished a face gentle, fair, and quiet, one that seemed to have been familiar to her in her dreams. She did not task her memory as to where she had seen the face before, and the two figures passed out of her sight.

Engaged to be married ! Pledged to share his home, and give her love to another, and that one not Henry St. George ! It seemed strange, when she recalled the feelings of six years ago. She repeated to herself the two names, Henry St. George, Fred Paget, to hear which made most music to her ears,—the latter undoubtedly ; and had the two been standing before her, for her to make her choice, unto which she would belong for life, it was to Fred Paget without doubt she would turn—he would shield her, guide her (and Patty thought she often required guidance), and tenderly care for her through life. In the happy consciousness of that feeling, Patty felt charitable to all, and more gently towards St. George than she had allowed herself to feel for long.

She was dreamily enjoying these reflections when she was startled by a loud scream, a scream of danger and alarm, followed by a fainter one. Patty jumped up, and rushed towards the scene from whence she had heard the screams proceed. She ran about twenty yards from where she had been sitting, to a lonely

spot where the edge of the cliff was so overgrown with bushes and underwood that it was difficult to distinguish where the steep descent of the cliff commenced.

It was an awful moment for Patty. The young lady had not heeded the advice of the coastguard: she had wandered from the footpath on to the close underwood, in her anxiety to secure some wild flower, had missed her footing, and had fallen some way down the steep cliff. She was hanging, as it were, in mid-air, quite alive to the danger of her position, clinging on to the branches of a bush of wild broom, her only support and bar against falling down the steep precipice into the sea, which was dashing and roaring against the rock, some thirty feet below her.

The danger was imminent, and no help was at hand; Patty looked vainly around for some of those voices whose laughter she had heard in the distance.

'Save me, save me! O, Henry, I'm dying, falling! Henry! Henry!' cried the poor girl.

And her voice thrilled through Patty's whole frame.

'Hold fast!' she called out; 'I can help you—don't be alarmed—hold fast, and you are safe!'

'I cannot,' called out the girl; 'I feel the root shaking. I have no hold for my feet.' But the human voice gave her courage, and she made a fresh effort to cling to the rock, and not hang her full weight on the bush.

In less time than it takes to write them, the thoughts flashed through Patty's mind—'It is scarcely possible to save her: I shall perish in the attempt, and I am very dear to some one,—she, too, is precious to some Henry.' Patty's resolve was taken: she looked around for some means of deliverance,—nothing was at hand. She must let something down for the girl to cling to—what could it be? Her flimsy dress and light shawl were useless.

Another scream from the girl,—'I am falling—I cannot hold out any longer!'

'For God's sake, one minute more!' exclaimed Patty.

She had pulled off her crinoline, and the strong white petticoat above it; it was the work of a moment to loop the calico petticoat into the crinoline, and let it down to the place where the girl was clinging on; she raised one hand carefully, but she could not catch the crinoline. Patty threw herself on the ground, grasped firmly with her left arm a young tree, and held the calico petticoat with her right hand as carefully as she could; her only

support was the trunk of the tree to which she clung, and the help it was to her, in pressing her knees into the ground.

Neither uttered one word; both realised the peril of the girl's loosening her hold of the broom for the impromptu ladder Patty had devised; she did it carefully, first with one hand, and then with the other, and as she finally left hold of the broom, a stone loosened and the roots of the bush gave way. Had it occurred one moment sooner, the young girl would have been dashed to atoms on the projecting rocks; or had she escaped from them, she would have been swallowed up by the seething waters beneath. In moving her hold, she found a slight rest for her feet, which helped to support her.

The two young girls hung between life and death; each moment seemed an hour; neither of them ventured to move, not even to scream for help: the crinoline ladder was so slight, they dreaded each moment that it might give way. It was fruitless Patty's attempting to drag up the other girl from her dangerous position; all she could do was by stretching her own arm to its fullest extent, to lend her some support, and ardently to long that some help would come.

They were in their perilous position about three minutes, but each second seemed a minute, each minute appeared an hour. With every nerve in full tension, they heard each sound with painful distinctness—the voices of birds, the hum of summer insects, the chirping of the grasshopper, the sound of human mirth receding from them, so close to them, and yet so unconscious of their agony—the very ticking of their own watches, which told how each second fled away, and warned how each second might be the last; above all was the angry splash of the coming tide, which seemed to them to say with each returning wave, 'How soon, how soon shall we bear you away to an unvisited grave!' Patty might save herself, perhaps: if their ladder broke, there was no hope for the unfortunate girl below her.

At last Patty thought she heard approaching footsteps, but they came from both sides.

'I am losing consciousness,' she thought with horror; 'if I do, we shall indeed be lost.'

Then she heard a dear and well-known voice—'Patty! Patty!' sounded in her ears. She tried to answer, but the sound of the sea drowned her voice; she heard every movement distinctly, but being below the level of the footpath she could not make herself heard. The footsteps came near, and then they receded,

and her heart sank within her, to know that help was so near, and yet so far away. She recognised the coastguard's voice :

'I doubt there's been an accident.'

The answer, 'Good Heavens !—where ?'

'About here,' answered the man. 'I heard screams, and there was a young lady : I warned her off the edge a little time past.'

'Patty !' exclaimed Fred Paget in a voice of horror.

'There were two on 'em,' said the man, searching the cliff as he spoke ; 'not her as was on the seat.'

Patty made one more effort. 'Help, Fred !' she cried, and the men heard her.

They redoubled their efforts, and in a few more seconds they discovered the two girls.

Patty was almost exhausted ; she thought her arm must drop from its socket ; and the other girl still clung, almost unconscious, to the crinoline that supported her.

They were saved from imminent death. The men drew them carefully to the top of the cliff. It was a matter of no small difficulty to save the young girl ; but the coastguard was at home among these rocky points, and at last he laid her on safe ground.

Fred clasped Patty in his arms, and whispered, 'My brave, my noble darling !'

'Don't say anything now,' she whispered ; 'I don't want to be foolish.'

She was very tremulous, and the sleeve of her dress was stained with the blood which came from her strained and bruised arm ; but she soon rallied, and stooped over the form of the poor girl who was laid on the grass. The girl was quite unconscious ; they loosened her dress and unfastened her boots : Fred Paget hurried away for some water, whilst Patty gently raised her head. The coastguard drew off her gloves.

'I do believe she's no girl ; she's a married woman. Here's a wedding-ring on her finger. Poor thing, poor thing ! I am afraid it will go hard with her.'

Patty looked into the small delicate face before her, lovely in its deadly pallor, half-concealed by the coils of flaxen hair which had escaped from their fastening and hung about her, and she felt that she had rescued from death her rival—the girl who had won Henry St. George from her ! Patty felt it ; she had never before met her face to face, but she had seen her photograph. She had dreamt of her, thought of her often ; often

pictured to herself her first meeting with her rival ; and now she knew that Lady Victoria St. George was resting on her knees, and saved by her from an awful death.

By this time many people had collected round them, and there were inquiries on all sides who the young lady was. How came she to be alone ? Her dress and appearance betokened distinction, and yet no one claimed acquaintance with her.

The crowd opened, and a stately, elegant lady came forward. She said in a composed manner, 'Victoria, my dear Victoria, are you hurt ?' But Victoria made no reply.

'I think, my lady,' said the coastguard—for Mrs. St. George was the style of person to whom the title my lady seemed naturally to apply—'we should get her away as soon as we can.'

'The carriage must be waiting for us,' said the lady. 'Do you think she is much hurt ?'

'I hope not,' said the coastguard. 'She owes what of life she keeps to that brave miss yonder—she is a brave 'un.'

He thought sufficient notice was not being taken of Patty's brave deeds.

'*He* will not know how to thank you sufficiently,' said the lady ; and Patty understood, though no one else knew, who the 'he' spoken of was.

Lady Victoria was laid in the carriage waiting outside the park for them, and Patty and Fred Paget got in with her. She was still insensible ; it seemed as though colour and life never could return to those pallid cheeks.

Mrs. St. George heard the outlines of the accident, and then said,

'Victoria always was devoted to wild flowers ; my dear son, her husband, is in town for a few days ; we were staying here for country air on Lady Victoria's account ; it will be a dreadful blow to him.'

It was on Patty's lips to say, 'Does he love her so very dearly ?' but she checked herself.

Patty found her mother waiting for her at the door of their house, where the carriage stopped to put her down. Mrs. St. George said at parting, 'They shall thank you themselves ; his gratitude to you will be eternal.'

Fred went with the carriage to see Lady Victoria to her house, and to telegraph to her husband, Henry St. George.

Mrs. Mitford had felt tired, and finding that her daughter had left her for so long, she had quietly returned home, begging another married lady to bring Patty home with her party ; so that

her engagement to Fred Paget and the subsequent adventure were equally unknown to her.

When she saw a grand carriage stop at her door, and a powdered footman hand her daughter into the house in the miserable state in which Patty was, she was greatly surprised, and overwhelmed Patty with questions, which Patty was quite unable to answer.

'What is the matter? What is that blood on your sleeve? Why are you so pale; and, my dearest child, where is your crinoline?' exclaimed Mrs. Mitford.

'Up a tree, mamma,' said Patty, laughing. It was true, for it was hanging on the shrubs on the cliff. Patty laughed at her own joke; but the excitement of the afternoon had been too much even for her, and she alarmed her mother by ending in a hearty flood of tears, from the midst of which she imparted the events of the last few hours.

When Fred Paget returned, he found Patty lying on the sofa; she was pale and quiet. She wore a loose white dressing-gown, for her arm was too swollen and painful to bear the pressure of a dress; it had been bathed and bandaged, and numerous splinters had been extracted.

Fred, with the eyes of a lover, thought, often as he had admired her, he had never seen her so lovely as she was this evening; it was well that Mrs. Mitford found she was busily engaged upstairs, and left them to themselves, for there was much to say; it came out slowly and by degrees. Patty was always returning to the subject of young Lady Victoria, speculating and wondering about her.

'I don't much wonder that he forgot me for her,' she said once, 'she has such a sweet look—so gentle.'

'I do,' replied Fred; 'and for the matter of that, when people are in a fainting-fit they generally are gentle.'

'Did you see him?' said Patty.

'No, I telegraphed for him; I did not leave her until the doctor came. He said she was not seriously hurt, only suffering from the dreadful shock. She had spoken to that stately lady, they said, before I came away, and inquired for her husband.'

'She seems very fond of him,' said Patty.

'I say, Patty, I am not of a jealous turn, but I shall be soon, if you go on so about them.'

Patty turned to him with the frank smile and the clear, open expression in her eyes which could not harbour deceit.

'No, Fred, you need not be jealous; with him it was novelty

and excitement, with you it is real affection and calm satisfaction. I am so glad everything has ended just as it has done.'

'I think we have heaped coals of fire on his head,' said Fred.

'Don't say that,' she said; 'I am too content with the world, to have a feeling of anger towards any one. Real life is stranger than fiction; in a novel they would say such a meeting as this was improbable, highly sensational.'

Fred laughed.

'You need not abuse Henry,' said Patty, who was more talkative than usual; 'you rather owe him something. When I was engaged to him, I was awfully fond of slang, rather fast, and too independent. I think he and life in general have sobered me somewhat.'

'It was those very qualities which made you plucky enough to save life in the way you did.'

'No, Fred,' said Patty, 'that was courage and nerve; the one is not a necessary consequence of the other.'

Patty had such a restless night, that by six o'clock in the morning she rose, and went out on to the beach, hoping that the peace of the early morning might soothe and calm her.

If any one interested in Patty's vicissitudes is unaware how nature looks on the beach at any time between dawn and seven o'clock in the morning, I recommend them this very autumn to make the experiment, and see if the pure, calm freshness of the early morn; the vast expanse of sand washed by the sea, and as yet unmarked by human foot, have not the soothing, invigorating influence upon them which they had on Patty Mitford.

She had walked until she was tired before she seated herself on the edge of an upturned fishing-boat, and sat gazing into the sea, scarcely framing into thoughts her intense thankfulness that she was as she was, and not buried in that treacherous deep, calm and smiling though it now was, where she had so nearly been.

Footsteps were approaching; some sailor she supposed—they stopped.

'Can you show me the nearest turn from the beach to the George Hotel?' said a voice—she knew it of old. She rose to her feet; Henry St. George stood before her. He recognised her, and looked as if a thunderbolt had fallen at his feet.

'Patty!' he exclaimed; he glanced at her bandaged arm; 'they said it was a Miss Mitford: I never thought it was you. Your brave deed saved the life of my wife.'

He could not utter words of thanks, confused, surprised, overpowered as he was by the sudden meeting.

Patty would have escaped if she could have done so, but she could not, and she looked at him with a composure she was far from feeling.

'Can I ever thank you enough?' he murmured, for the silence was embarrassing.

'Mr. St. George, I would rather not receive your thanks—I should have done the same for any one. I hope Lady Victoria is better?'

'Better—O yes, much better, thank you!' he said hurriedly. He stood near her, as if he could neither move away nor speak; the silence was awkward to both.

The ease of manner and composure St. George had prided himself upon seemed quite at fault. Patty was the first to be equal to the occasion.

'It is no use pretending to meet like strangers,' she said; 'I hope your wife will soon be better. Perhaps you are not aware that I am on the point of being married to one who is far more suited to me than any one I ever knew before.'

'Patty,' exclaimed Henry, 'had there been any prospect, any hope, I should never have given you up.'

'Hush!' said Patty proudly. 'I was only a child then: I thought love stronger than ambition, it was a child's mistake. I am very glad things are as they are; I hope your choice is as fortunate as I know mine to be.'

'How can I thank you! That you, of all people, should have perilled your life for my wife!'

Patty smiled her old sweet smile, which once had had power to bewitch him.

'It was my revenge. Even you must allow I had a right to some revenge. Good-bye!' She reached him her hand, which he silently took.

'Fred dear,' said Patty at breakfast the same morning, 'mamma and I are going to leave; this place is too exciting for us. I really can't stand so many coincidences and rencontres.'

If there are any in this nineteenth century who still cling to the notion of loving once and for ever, which, as Mrs. Poyser aptly said, 'must for ever be like the hen who sits brooding over addled eggs,' let them pay a flying visit to Grangeham Rectory; let them look on the lawn there, and see Fred Paget, and Mrs. Fred, the old doctor, and Master Fred, a happy group, amongst which it is hard to say which is most content with

things as they are at Grangeham Rectory. There is happiness, too, in the house in town, where Lady Victoria sits, and copies letters for her husband, busy with political pamphlets. But Patty is the first to own that the free country-life where her lot is cast is more suited to her, with 'dear Fred' by her side, than the duties of the member's wife, which would have been hers, had she filled the place that Lady Victoria now occupies.

HOW ALGY WON THE BET.

CHAPTER I. HOW THE BET WAS MADE.

MR. ALGERNON BATES was one of those individuals whose youth is full of so much precocious genius as to justify their friends in prophesying all sorts of great things of them, to come off at some future period of their prospective career. Strange to relate, however, this future period never arrives, or at least is such a very long time putting in an appearance, that the said friends become dubious and desponding, though loath to acknowledge the unfulfilment of their predictions.

When Algy was a boy he showed so much dawning talent with his pencil that 'the friends' were positively certain he would 'turn out' a great thing in painters; when he grew up and assumed the *toga virilis* he made himself so conspicuous as an amateur actor that 'the friends' declared the laurels of another Garrick awaited him; and when he brought out his comedy-drama, in four acts, of *Nathalie, or the Model*, with a terse, spirited dialogue, and two or three capital 'situations,' it was considered that he was on the high road to fame and fortune.

Eheu, fugaces anni! Years rolled over Algy's spruce, carefully-tended head; his back-hair does not take him so long in the 'doing' now, there is not so much behind as of yore, and it's 'getting very thin on the top, sir,' for poor Algy is going on for thirty now, and both fame and fortune are as far off as they were ten years ago. He has written another comedy-drama since, which he fondly thought would draw overflowing houses, but it did not keep its place in the bills after the second week; he managed to get a burlesque produced, with a new 'skedaddle break-down' of his own invention, which he likewise was certain would be a 'great go' and fill the treasury, but

somehow or other it did neither. He has had several little pictures in the Suffolk-street Exhibition, and his 'Dead Warrior' was hung on the line in the Academy; but again, somehow or other, people didn't buy them there. Then they were sent off to Manchester exhibitions and salerooms, then travelled round to the Crystal Palace at Sydenham, and so back again to London and the Art-Unions, ultimately, perhaps, finding their way in sheer desperation to Algy's studio, where they turned their faces meekly to the wall, and gave themselves up to dust and the tender mercies of the charwoman.

Once Algy managed to work the oracle so that Mr. Bompas, the eminent dealer, was induced to visit his studio in company with Tickler, the art critic of the *Daily Thunderbolt*, who had promised to say a good word for him. But Mr. Bompas only screwed his lips tightly together, and said, 'Yes, yes, very nice, ve-ry nice; but hardly popular, my dear sir, hardly popular; too big by a size; wouldn't go anywhere but in the hall. Concentrate and popularise yourself, my dear sir; concentrate and popularise yourself.'

So Algy set to work and tried to 'concentrate and popularise himself;' to do which he painted 'My love, Agnes,' a tall and crummy young lady with large eyes, wonderfully golden locks, and plenty of them, in a bewitching species of bedgown attire, which showed the shape of 'Agnes' rather too transparently, and gazing pensively over a marble parapet into an imaginary future, while the last glory of the setting sun was skilfully adapted to fall on her hair and upturned face.

Unfortunately for Algy, this was so different from his usual style, that Tickler took it to be the work of some man he had never heard of, so was down upon 'Agnes' directly.

He was at great pains to show 'how woolly was her hair, how long and stiff her left arm, how out of all drawing her chin, and how palpably theatrical were the means by which the effect was produced;' lastly, 'he was surprised that the hanging committee had "placed" so absurd a caricature of all Art.'

Thus poor Algy was hopelessly set upon, and threw his brushes out of window in disgust.

On a hot afternoon in August, some few days after the above notice appeared in the journal Mr. Tickler was good enough to write for, our friend was sitting in his Temple chambers, smoking the pipe of consolation, and pondering upon things. Essentially a hot and drowsy afternoon. The gardens

in front of his opened window were drowsy; the two or three men whose sole duty appears to consist in moving the pots of chrysanthemums from one part of the grounds to another, were too drowsy even to go through that performance; the river was drowsy, as it lay winking in the glare; the young lady in book-muslin who found the broad walk so charming a promenade, and was there of course by the merest accident, had given up the restless peepings at her watch, and composed herself to drowsy meditation; and Mr. Bates himself was drowsy; the influence of the hour was upon him; his soul was vexed within him; he had much upon his mind—'mental anxiety was killing him,' as he told his friends, pathetically. In the first place, there was Jenkins's bill coming due at the end of the month; there was Rowney's account for the last two years still unpaid, and he couldn't put them off any longer; there was another picture returned from Manchester unsold; and there was the eighteen-gallon cask of Allsopp he had just got in 'turned' by the late thunderstorm; and, worse than all, there was that horrid nightmare which had been keeping him sleepless for weeks, and, like an indigestible piece of pork, always kept turning up when least expected; for the truth could be stifled no longer—he was *getting bald on the top of his head!*

Getting bald! He didn't care a rush for Truefitt's young men; he never used to believe what those flippant and unfeeling creatures told him; but *now*, here was the evidence of his own eyes. His only hope of redemption was in making a good thing in the way of a marriage, and he was *getting bald* already!

'Any odds you like I'll pitch upon the winner—I should say, your thoughts,' drawled a languid voice behind him.

'O, it's you, is it?' said Algy, without removing the pipe from his lips. 'The most comfortable one is in *that* corner,' indicating a leather easy-chair with the toe of his Turkish slipper.

The owner of the voice, who had been testing the softness of the sofa with a delicate hand, muttered a feeble 'Tha-anks,' and dropped into the chair.

'Thought I'd look in, and—that sort of thing, you know. Eh? Trichinopoly? No, thanks; too strong; always carry my own weeds. Dull?—O, shocking. Goin' away next week—Eh? Baden, I think. Where are you going to?'

'The devil.'

'Ah, yes. What's the matter?—down on your luck?'

'Yes; I've pretty nearly got to the end of my tether.'

'H'm, so have I.'

'Ah! Well, what's to be done, then?'

'Marry.'

'Just what I was thinking of.'

'Thought you were: looked like it.'

'Well, but, of course, you see it's a risky affair.'

'How much do you mean to go in for?'

'What, tin?'

'Of course; what else could there be?'

'Well, I put myself down as worth twenty-five thou.'

'Deuce you do?'

'Decidedly; or I don't object to a present income of seven or eight hundred.'

'Bet you don't get either one or t'other. Bet two to one you don't get either one or t'other within six months.'

'I think I shall; don't you see?' And Algy began to explain how many men of his acquaintance put themselves down at so much, and had gone in and won.

'I never argue,' said the other, without attempting to answer him; 'life's a doosid deal too short for that sort of thing. If—fellow begins that sort of thing, I stop him at once by offering odds against his proposition. Don't you see, it brings him to a point; practical, and all that. Then, too, there's the chance of a little excitement being got out of it. Bet you five to one in fifties you don't do it in six months; ten to one in ditto don't do it in three.'

'I'll take you.'

'Good,' said the other, deliberately taking out an elaborate memoranda-book. 'All sorts of little transactions here; every one of 'em shut some fellow up. Know Peyton? Big, positive, Scotch brute in Guards? Said other day in club, Jack Saltmarsh gave five hundred for the bay ponies Rosey Watson drives. Knew they weren't worth that. Told him so. Contradicted me, and began argument. Bet him two to one I was right. Peyton tried to draw off; knew he was wrong; only said it for argument. Beastly Scotchman! Kept him to the mark, and booked the bet. "July 20.—Eighteen pairs of gloves with Mrs. Balfour." Contradicted me about Mario's age. Bet her d'rectly. Couldn't say any more, you know. "August 3.—Old Jowler said he could tell the vintage of all the wine in—club, by smell. Argument. Bet him. Stopped argument." "August 8.—Even fiver with Haldane, that the receipts of his theatre would fall short of a hundred per night after three

weeks' run. Haldane positive the piece would draw. All puff and brag. Bet him. Got him in regular hole." Here you are. "August 21.—Bet Algy Bates ten to one in fifties he don't get married to five-and-twenty thou', or an income of seven hundred per ann. clear, within three calendar months from date above." Will that do?"

'Ten fifties: all right.' So the bet was duly entered, and Dick Winslow, who affected a fashionable indifference to everything, but in the matter of business was particularly shrewd, then took his departure.

Then Algy lit another pipe, and pulled himself together to think the matter out.

Now it so happened that about this period of Mr. Bates's existence, he, strange to relate, had fallen in love. Not for the first time, by any means, but the first time it was accompanied with the idea of matrimony; for, with Algy, the two generally meant something very different, and had nothing whatever in common with each other.

Miss Rose Chumley had been 'doing' the 'leading business' at the Theatres Royal Liverpool and Birmingham for some two or three years before she attracted the notice of London managers. At last a paragraph appeared in the *Era*, announcing that 'Miss Chumley had accepted a liberal offer made her by Mr. Slum, of the "Parthenon," and would appear on such and such a night, in a "new drama written expressly for her by Ferrers Brown, Esq."'

The first night came, and the 'Parthenon' was crammed to the roof. A new piece by Ferrers Brown was always interesting; and then the circumstance of its being written for an actress who was unknown to a London audience made it still more so. Miss Chumley rather nervous during the first act, while a running commentary of 'very poor,' 'no power,' 'O, this'll never do,' 'very weak,' 'regular frost,' &c., went on from the expectant critics 'in front;' then a remarkable exhibition of feeling in the next act roused the audience. From that time she gradually worked them up, and held them in her grasp till the strong *dénouement* in the last scene, when the curtain came down on thunders of applause, and Miss Chumley quite overcome by her feelings and the bouquets. Algernon Bates, sitting in the front stalls with Potts, the critic of the *Sunday Magnet*, was enchanted. He saw at once that she would 'rise.' He must be introduced to her without any delay. He had a plot in his mind's eye then that would suit her style to a hair; no claptrap

and studied artificial *poses*, no showing the whites of the eyes and hysterical sobbing business—everything natural, unaffected, but graceful. She was ‘chawming,’ Potts said; and that was something, coming from Potts.

‘How well she kept it down in the first act! There’s intelligence in everything, by Jove! Then what a good listener she is! By Jove, sir, it’s a treat, a positive treat!’

And Bates was all in a glow of enthusiasm. Visions of his new comedy, with Miss Chumley bringing down the house, kept him broad awake all that night.

Now although Algy had not succeeded in getting publishers, theatrical managers, and picture-dealers to acknowledge his great genius, being people for the most part cruelly practical in their notions of the business of life, he had always found an indulgent audience among the fair sex, generally succeeding in causing them to regard him as a man whose talent had been stifled and prevented from asserting its proper position in the world by the malignant envy and spite of his enemies in power. For Algy was possessed of that gift which surely should be placed before all others: genius, talent, energy, are trifles in comparison with the faculty of pleasing women. So he considered it only necessary for him to throw his handkerchief to Miss Chumley, and did not admit the possibility of its being ‘returned with thanks.’

Algy, therefore, enveloped in a complete fog of smoke of his own manufacturing, naturally thought of Miss Chumley at once. The only difficulty was the income,—the actress’s salary at the ‘Parthenon’ at present could not be more than five pounds per week; and what was that? It must be increased by another ten before she could be put on his list. No, Miss Chumley was out of the question. ‘Great pity, because he really did—eh? yes, he really *did*—pshaw, can’t afford that sort of thing *now*.’ Then he put down all the girls with money he could muster, and found that the list was not so long as he had reckoned. The time of year, moreover, was dead against him,—everybody was away from town. He must go in pursuit; but where, and who should he pursue? It was a difficult matter. They were all scattered now, here, there, and everywhere. If he went to Baden after Miss Smith, Miss Jones at Scarborough would escape him; and if he laid siege to Mrs. Lazarus at Brighton, he should miss the Brown girls at Rome. The more he cast the matter over in his mind, the more difficult it appeared; and he began to regret the bet with Dick Winslow.

The result of Algy’s cogitations, which lasted several days,

and during which time he consumed a vast amount of Cavendish, was, his packing a portmanteau and starting off to Rome in chase of the Brown girls. There were two Miss Browns, so that he stood a double chance of success. Old Brown was said to be worth a quarter of a million, and the girls adored Art. So Algy set off with the intention of personifying Art, and becoming adored by Matilda or Josephine, it didn't matter which.

CHAPTER II. HOW THE FIRST GAME WAS LOST.

It is the latter end of October, and Mr. Bates is sitting forlornly before a naked canvas in his studio; his palette and brushes are in readiness for use; but Algy heeds them not. He has just returned from Rome, having proposed to Matilda, the most likely of the 'Brown girls,' and been refused by the 'governor,' and the 'governor,' moreover, in a towering rage, which made him so far forget himself as to call our friend 'an adventurer, by Gad!' leaving any further chance of success out of the question. Algy had taken Brighton on his way back, only to be disappointed by finding that Mrs. Lazarus, the rich widow, who once regarded him with eyes of favour, had left for Baden the week before. So, in sheer despair, he had found his way back to London.

What was to be done now? On the 20th of next month, barely three weeks more, time would be up, and where he should get the money from for Dick Winslow goodness only knew. He sat thus, staring dejectedly at the canvas, till he began to think there was not much good to be got out of the prospect, and took up the *Times*. Naturally enough he turned to the theatrical advertisements; he had quite dropped out of the civilised world the last two months,—the civilised world meaning with Algy the literary and artistic world of London, made up of theatres, editors' sanctums, Bohemian clubs, and exhibition-rooms.

'Third representation of the "Shadow on the Wall, or Sister Grace,"—pronounced by the press and the unanimous voice of the public to be the greatest success ever known. Sister Grace—Miss Chumley.'

'Miss Chumley! H'm! ha!—Miss Chumley—*Miss Chumley*. Wonder what salary old Slum gives her now? Evidently *the* draw in the theatre. Let's see, who can tell me? Jackson 'll know, daresay.'

Then he opened the door and shouted 'Jackson!'

Now 'Jackson' was engaged in the evenings as a permanent super at the 'Parthenon Theatre,' and during the day, to use his own words, 'went out a-settin';' which meant, that for the sum of eighteenpence an hour he lent his portly figure for the instruction of artists painting from the 'life.'

Mr. Jackson, who was engaged by Algy to sit for a 'Dying Gladiator,' in what he considered would be a new and striking attitude, and had been beguiling the tedium of a long 'wait' outside by partaking of an *al fresco* luncheon on the stairs, here-upon made his appearance. Being interrogated as to the amount of salary Miss Chumley was then drawing at the 'Parthenon,' Mr. Jackson replied—

'That, to his certin knowledge, hold Slum paid her as much as fifteen pound, which he, Mr. Jackson, considered a mortal shame: she no more dored fifteen pound than he did; but then, lor' bless yer, the gents in the papers wrote her hup *that* like.' &c.

'Fifteen pounds! Fifteen multiplied by fifty-two was 780. Enough and to spare, by Jove! *Thank* you, Jackson,—much obliged; have something to drink? So will I. Capital! Hurrah! Take care of yourself now, Dick, my bo-oy; take care of yourself.'

The very next morning Algy made a careful toilette, and sallied forth to call upon the now popular actress.

During the twelve months that had passed since Miss Chumley made her *début* at the 'Parthenon,' and, in the language of the press notices, 'made a pleasing impression upon a London audience,' she had rapidly advanced in public favour, and, what was of more real consequence to her, in the profession.

On this particular morning, Miss Chumley is sitting in her own particular lounge chair, making belief to read a very dogs'-eared manuscript, which indeed is no other than Mr. Bates's new comedy. Miss Chumley's lodgings, where she resides with her mamma—an old lady addicted to snuff, and gin in her tea, but otherwise very harmless—are in the Hampstead road. They consist of only the first floor; but then it is not a common first floor by any means; it is a first floor under peculiarly happy auspices, for Miss Chumley's graceful presence might almost be seen pervading it, even to the very furniture and belongings of the rooms. Nobody but Miss Chumley would have thought of putting that naturally ugly sofa into that particular dark corner, and hiding its bristling horsehair under the daintiest of chintzes;

nobody but Miss Chumley could have arranged the books and knick-knacks on that rickety little table so as to produce such a really pretty effect ; and nobody but Miss Chumley could have chosen blinds of that colour, which, when they were drawn nearly down, as she liked them to be, diffused so roseate a hue over everything, and suited to such a nicety her own not particularly brilliant complexion.

Somebody coming upstairs. Miss Chumley draws the blind a few inches lower, moves her chair so that she sits with her back to the light, and is absorbed in the ms.

‘Mr. Bates, ’m.’

And the next moment our friend is shaking hands impressively with the rising actress. Then, after a few minutes spent in anathematising the weather, they begin to talk about the ‘piece.’

‘Did Miss Chumley like it?’

‘Ye-es, she thought it a good piece.’

‘So glad to hear that. Did she like the heroine’s part?’

‘Well, to tell you the truth, Mr. Bates, only pretty well.’

‘Would you like to play it yourself?’

‘O, not as it stands ; I couldn’t, really I couldn’t.’

‘No? What is there you object to!’

‘Well, de Vismes (Algy’s villain) has all the dialogue.’

‘H’m ; he certainly has a good deal ; but then he gives you all the situations.’

‘Not quite all, Mr. Bates ; how about the third act? Now, he’s quite welcome to any situations in the first and second acts, but I can’t afford to let anybody have those in the last. I need not tell you that I always like starting quietly and keeping it all down till towards the *dénouement*, then I want plenty of room for myself. As it stands now, he interferes with my climax.’

‘Well, supposing I cut out his business with the stolen will, and bring on Mugley in something comic as a set-off to your scene with the mother?’

‘You may do anything you like, so long as there’s nothing to interfere with me in the third act.’

Then Algy took the ms. and showed how he thought of cutting down the villain’s part, putting in another situation for the heroine, and giving her generally the best of it. Miss Chumley’s face grew brighter as he showed how all this could be done.

So Algy put the ‘piece’ in his pocket, and began to talk of other topics, gradually leading the conversation round from things in general to discuss himself in particular.

In his conversation with women, when he was sure of his audience and safe from any risk of being caught out, Algy was particularly fond of the *egomet ipse* business, and a great adept at ringing the changes thereupon. He could invest himself in a garment of sentiment and interest as easily as he put on his overcoat. His imagination was vivid, and when his well of facts had run dry, invention came gushing forth in rippling streams of eloquent *egomet ipse*. He had a way of throwing himself upon the sympathies of his audience, handing himself over to their tender consideration (as if he were 'glass with care'), which was irresistible, containing as it did a mute acknowledgment of their interest, and recognition of a superior power of consolation.

'He had come to the conclusion,' he was saying to Miss Chumley, 'which was, perhaps, a foregone one, that the way in which his life drifted along was very, very unsatisfactory. Every man should have an object in his life, you allow that, don't you?'

Miss Chumley said, 'Of course, that was right enough.'

Now Algy had an expressive voice, and a wonderful command over its different tones. It was, in fact, a perfect orchestra, all the instruments effectively played by himself.

'Well,' he said, taking out his 'softened melancholy' flageolet and discoursing with it, 'you see I am one of those unfortunate fellows who have gone on hitherto with no object; perhaps it is one of the causes of my general failure—I have often thought so.' Here a pause and a gloomy stare into the fire. 'Ah, Miss Chumley, you are in a position to be envied.'

Miss Chumley said, 'Good gracious me, why?'

'Because you are successful.'

All women like success, which is power, and still more like to be told of it, which is a tribute to their power; so Miss Chumley smiled and was pleased. Algy saw he had made an impression.

'It is only poor, unsuccessful devils like myself,' continued the flageolet, softer than ever, 'that can appreciate success in others to its full meed. Now success to the artist is everything. Would that I had some hope, some incentive to help *my* flagging energy!' Here a new movement on the stop-notes produced a plaintive sigh, which, followed by a discreet silence for a full minute, made Miss Chumley feel her position becoming slightly embarrassing. Then he went on again.

'Miss Chumley,' he said, 'will you pardon me if I come to

the point of what I wish to say at once?' He did not stop to give her the chance of refusing. 'The pleasure of your acquaintance has been mine for some time now ; always recognising your true artist-nature, is it surprising that my admiration for its expression should have ripened into admiration for your own person, not for the actress, but for Rose Chumley herself? Miss Chumley, I have learnt to love you most sincerely ; may I venture to hope—'

She had risen in her agitation at this climax, and stood facing him.

'O, dear me,' she said, 'don't say that, please ; don't say that.'

Algy sat gazing with all his eyes, surprised at the nervous oddness of her manner.

'I am so sorry,' she went on ; 'O, so very sorry ; but that is exactly what Mr. Levy has been saying.'

'Mr. Levy ?'

'Yes ; he went away just before you came.'

'You mean the Jew lawyer ?'

'No, he's not a Jew now ; he was converted some years ago.'

'O, was he ? Well ?'

'He said the very same thing you have been saying.'

'*He* did—to you ?'

'Mr. Levy has done me the honour of asking me to become his wife.'

'The deu— Good heavens ! and what did you say ?'

'I said I would.'

'The deu— Good heavens ! Why didn't you tell me of this at once ?'

'Really, Mr. Bates—'

'O,' recovering himself, 'Rose—Miss Chumley, I mean—pardon me—naturally agitated—this is cruel of you, cruel,' and he leant his elbow on the mantelpiece and looked despairingly at the yellow and green pattern of Miss Chumley's hearthrug.

There was a pause for a few minutes and a moment's silence ; then Miss Chumley went up to him and laid her hand upon his arm.

'Don't be angry with me, Mr. Bates ; I did it for the best. If I had thought for a moment that—that you—of course I shouldn't—shouldn't—but he's very good-natured and has *so* much money, you know—'

'Whereas I have none ; speak it out—I can bear anything now.'

‘O, no, no, no,’ and her eager face appealed against his words. ‘Now it is you are cruel: do not say you think so badly of me as that, Mr. Bates. Tell me you don’t mean that.’

As he looked down on the face, so mobile in expression and animated by every thought that at the moment dwelt in her mind, now pleadingly upturned to his, genuine feeling for the time moved him, as he said, passionately,

‘I hardly know what I am saying. You are the only woman I have ever loved; I say so in all truth and sincerity, and it seems very hard, very hard. I know that I do love you truly, Rose, for I can even now wish that you may be happy with that man. As for me, well, there it’s all over now. Good-bye, good-bye.’

‘You will be friends still; you don’t bear any malice? Tell me we shall still be friends.’

‘Friends!’ he exclaimed bitterly, and turned on his heel to go. Then, as he opened the door, it struck him that he had been rather hard with her; it would not do him any harm accepting her friendship, and it might be useful to him some day, who can tell? So he went back again and held out his hand.

‘Let us be friends, Miss Chumley, and forgive me my harshness,’ with the bright smile which so often had stood him in good need before.

She gave him both hands, after her impulsive manner, and pressed his warmly.

Then he went away, and walked down the Hampstead-road, thinking it all over. ‘What could he do now?’ The vision of Dick Winslow and his memoranda-book stared him in the face at every step he took. He told himself that he was ‘regularly done.’ How nice she was; how honest and unaffected; how very different to the namby-pamby young ladies he met in society! Yes, he really did—did he really? Yes, he thought he actually *did* love her, bar the bet and for herself. It was very hard upon him, doosid hard. That beast Levy too, a man who blew his nose with a report like a cannon, and wore Blucher boots. However, he would be miserably jealous and uncomfortable—that was a consolation. A man who isn’t in the profession never should marry an actress. Just as he comes home tired from the City, or wherever it is, his wife is putting on her bonnet.

‘Time she was at the theatre already.’

‘Well, but there’s no such desperate hurry.’

‘Well, but I’m on when the curtain goes up.’

‘Never mind ; take a hansom.’

‘Besides, there’s James wants to see me before I go on.’

‘James ?’

‘Yes ; he’s making my wig for Lady Audley—such a lovely flaxen. Bye, bye.’

So the poor husband has to eat his dinner with only himself for company ; and as he has had himself for company all day, he finds it, on the whole, rather slow. Poor Levy ! and for the matter of that, poor Rose too ! What affinity can exist between her thoroughly artist-nature and a man who goes to sleep over Miss Faucit, and calls Tennyson ‘rubbishy nonsense’ ?

CHAPTER III. ‘SHUFFLE THE CARDS.’

WHEN Algy got back to his chambers after his expedition to the Hampstead-road, he took out a letter from the litter of unfinished mss., pen-and-ink sketches, unpaid bills, and other documents scattered broadcast over his writing-table, and sat down to answer it. The letter was from Mrs. Jortin, a most particular friend of Algy’s, and it begged him to take pity on her and come down to their place in Hampshire, for as long as he could spare the time. Algy had deferred replying to this invitation, thinking it would rest, probably, with Miss Chumley whether he should be able to accept it ; but now he thought it would be the very thing for him. So he wrote off a note to Mrs. Jortin, in which he said ‘that nothing could give him greater pleasure than going to them for a short holiday ; he had been desperately busy lately, and should rejoice in a little change,’ &c. Not a word did he say about Rome and Matilda Brown.

Two days later saw him bowling down to the Waterloo Station, having, as he expressed it, ‘got over the Chumley business beautifully,’ which meant that he had not quite broken his heart about the ‘Parthenon’ actress. He might pick up the money in Hampshire, as likely there as anywhere. Never say die !

The Jortins, with whom he was going to stay, were county people, and swells in their way ; so Algy had got himself up accordingly. Nobody could tell, he thought, who he might meet while there. The Miss Jortins had very little money, but there might be some one else who it would be worth while ‘going in for.’ The deuce of it was there only being three weeks left to him.

Now, no one understood better than Algy the great art of getting himself up so as to be 'effective' without showing that any 'effect' was meant. He knew exactly what colours suited him, what sort of coats and hats were most in his 'style.' He never committed that great mistake most men fall into, of wearing anything ultra in the way of hats and coats because everybody else did, but managed to keep sufficiently near the prevailing fashion without allowing it to ruin his appearance. When he wished to produce an impression, he went in for 'effects' in a deliberately professional manner. His 'get-up,' as he jumped out of the hansom at Waterloo, was artistic in the highest degree. This particular time he affected the 'swell,' without any of the languid airs and graces of that animal; it was the swell carefully toned down and unaffected, with a dash of the man of genius in its composition. He was particularly happy in his boots, his gloves, and, above all, his umbrella; an umbrella, when carried with discretion, is always effective. Algy walked down the platform apparently noticing nothing, but in reality taking everything in that he considered 'worth his while.'

Miss Tatum, the only daughter and heiress of Septimus Tatum, the eminent soapboiler and M.P., standing with her maid at the door of the ladies' waiting-room, was mortified that the 'extremely interesting-looking man' passed by without noticing her in the least, though she had plenty of time to observe his melancholy eyes, his small feet, and the elaborate rug he carried carelessly over his left arm. Our friend Algy, however, had seen Miss Tatum some ten minutes ago. He saw her from his cab get out of a brougham and pair outside the station, and happened to hear her tell the maid to take two tickets for Basingstoke; then, as he was paying his cabman, he heard some one on the platform say, 'D'ye know who that is? That's old Tatum's daughter, that is.' Now Algy, of course, knew 'old Tatum' by reputation: who could have so much money and remain unknown? He also knew that the old gentleman had only one child, a daughter, who would have all his wealth. This young lady, then, with the blue bonnet and flaxen chignon, would be Miss Florence Tatum.

'Good forehead and eyes, pretty mouth, bad nose; great pity; goodish figure, what there is of it,' said Algy to himself, 'totting up the points' of blue-bonnet rapidly. Then, 'what a heap of money, too—all from soap! Rather low and common—soap; if it had only been Australian wool, now, or even tea; but there's something about soapboiling that goes against the

grain. However, he's an M.P., and that ought to carry off the soap ; there's a sense of ponderosity and respectability about the House of Commons, which covers a multitude of sins.'

Basingstoke ! He distinctly heard her say Basingstoke. *He* was going to Basingstoke ; that was where *Bradshaw* showed that he must change trains, and take the little branch-line that went to New Compton, where Mrs. Jortin's carriage was to meet him.

So Algy sauntered up to the book-stall, and laid out quite a little fortune in *Punch*, *Illustrated London News*, *London Society*, and all the things that were embellished with pretty pictures. He sauntered about there till the bell rang, and Miss Tatum, sending off her maid with divers parcels to a second-class carriage, got into a first-class by herself.

Just as the train was about to start, and people were rushing to and fro in the usual frantic state of people at a railway-station, Miss Tatum saw the 'interesting-looking man,' more unexcited than ever, lounge quietly up to her carriage, and—yes—actually open the door ! He looked in for a moment, as if uncertain whether he should honour it with his presence, then got slowly in and sat down opposite her.

Miss Tatum thought she had never before seen such—such—she couldn't find another word that better expressed what she meant—such an 'interesting-looking man.' His large dark eyes seemed to gaze, right away beyond everything, into—into *the Past* ; and his smile (did he ever smile ?) would be wonderfully sweet ; how could it be otherwise with such a mouth ?

'Did she prefer the window up, or down ?'

'O, down, please.' She knew that she was right about the mouth ; and if there was one thing she liked to see in a man, it was a *bien ganté* hand.

'Did she care to look at *Punch* ?—perhaps, though, she had seen it ?'

'No, she hadn't seen *Punch*. O, thanks !'

'Very dull, I'm afraid ; very poor now. Want to see that picture ? Allow me to cut it for you.'

'O, thanks—*thanks*.'

'Rather pretty, though, that high light on the girl's head, is it not ? Du Maurier : but perhaps you don't admire Du Maurier ?'

'Yes, I think it's pretty.'

Then a pause, during which Miss Tatum looks carefully at Mr. Tenniel's cartoon, thinking that the 'melancholy' eyes are regarding her the while. When at length Miss Tatum looks up,

feeling very conscious, she is dreadfully mortified to find that the 'melancholy eyes' are gazing far away out at the distant horizon, and that his thoughts apparently have followed them. So she crumpled-up unhappy *Punch*, making as much noise doing so as was possible in a limp sheet of paper. It was enough, however, to wake up Mr. Bates; and, pulling himself together, he began a conversation which Miss Tatum found so agreeable, that 'she was quite astonished, and really didn't think it possible that Basingstoke could have been reached so soon.' Basingstoke it was, though, and she had to change her train, to do which she was obliged to mount a precipitous wooden bridge over the station, which she 'would never have done if it had not been for Mr. Bates's assistance;' then 'she was so much obliged to him for taking *such* trouble' in getting all her luggage and parcels, including Trotter, the maid, who of course was perfectly helpless, into the other train. For Algy had ascertained that his fellow-passenger was going on to the same place as himself.

The small station of New Compton was reached, and Algy found his carriage duly waiting, but, strange to say, there was nothing come to meet Miss Tatum.

'What *shall* I do?' said blue-bonnet; 'six miles to our house, and not even a fly to be had! No, there never *is* a fly here. How could papa have made such a mistake? O, *thank* you;—Tatum—Mr. Tatum, of Lyme House.'

Here Algy went off to interrogate the porter, 'If Mr. Tatum's carriage had not come, or if he had heard anything of it? Nothing known of it whatever.'

'Would Miss Tatum do him the honour of accepting the carriage sent for him? The Jortins' house was but a shortish walk, and he should be *so* delighted if Miss Tatum would make use of it.'

'O, he was most kind; but—but she really didn't like—'

'Porter, take Miss Tatum's luggage to that carriage. Pray do not refuse me this.'

Then Miss Tatum found herself driving off in the brougham before she knew how to express her thanks in what she considered a suitable manner, and saw a vision of Mr. Bates standing with his hat in his hand, recovering his perpendicular after an elaborate bow.

With his crisp toast and delicate omelette waiting on the breakfast-table the following morning, Mr. Bates found a solitary letter, with particularly business-like writing; it was not from

one of his creditors, for, as he said, 'the many reminders he received from them caused him to know their caligraphy to a T.'

It was from Miss Tatum's papa. The eminent soapboiler began by expressing 'his thanks to Mr. Bates for his thoughtful kindness in looking after his daughter;' then went on to 'regret that an attack of his old enemy, the gout, prevented his calling upon Mr. Bates to thank him in person, but trusted that he would excuse that ceremony, and come over and dine with them the next day; would be very glad to see him, and dinner on table at seven, sharp.'

So Algy went over to Lyme House, and made himself very agreeable to the soapboiler, as also to the soapboiler's fair daughter, when he was not looking that way. After the interval of a few days, Algy called, and was again pressed to come and dine, which he did. In short, Algy made himself so much liked at Lyme House that, when the time (he made his own time, by the by) arrived for him to leave Mrs. Jortin's and return to town, Mr. Tatum begged that he would make Lyme House his place of abode for another week or so. This was one for Algy and two for himself; for the worthy soapboiler was that week going to have his house full of guests, and purposed giving a series of entertainments—private theatricals, balls, and dinners—and he knew that Algy was a useful man at that sort of thing. Our friend saw the position at a glance, and that there would be a capital chance for his distinguishing himself. So he took over his household gods to Lyme House, and was installed as master of the approaching ceremonies.

'He was invaluable,' Miss Tatum told her papa; 'she didn't know *what* they should have done without him.' It was, 'O, Mr. Bates, how shall we do this?' &c., and 'O, Mr. Bates, *will* you look here, and tell me what you think?' &c. He not only was the manager-in-general, the principal actor, the organiser of the amateur orchestra, and the scene-painter in the theatricals, but he actually wrote the piece they performed—'quite impromptu, you know,' Miss Tatum said and believed, though it was only an old two-act comedietta Bates had by him vamped up for the occasion. Then he got up that Irish jig in the ball, which, but for it, would have been a dismal failure; and was the life and soul of the 'big dinners.' Little Miss Tatum used to listen to him rattle about art and literature, superficial politics, and cynical banter on social topics, quite lost in admiration at such talent; 'how clever Mr. Bates is! and knows everything, you know.'

At length the day drew near when all this was to end; there was to be a dance the next evening, the last of the hospitable soapboiler's entertainments, and the day after that Algy was to return to London.

'To-morrow,' said Algy to himself, the night before this last dance, hanging over his candle extinguisher in hand, 'to-morrow I shall know my fate, Bates or Winslow.'

CHAPTER IV. 'HEARTS ARE TRUMPS.'

'A CAPITAL band, and the very best of Mr. Godfrey's vales.' Miss Tatum was in high dancing order, and went into the ball-room that evening with the full intention of enjoying herself thoroughly. 'A good dance, with good music and nice partners,' was her utmost ambition in the way of enjoyment. Yet why should Mr. Bates find himself unconsciously indulging in a satirical grin as he said this to himself? Miss T. was not different to other young ladies in her ideas of enjoyment.

Mr. Bates, that evening, was silent and abstracted; he was by turns tender and abrupt in his demeanour towards Miss Tatum. When asked by her timidly, 'if anything had gone wrong; was there enough cucumber in the hock-cup—papa wanted *particularly* to know what he thought of it?' he only gazed fixedly at nothing in particular, and sighed absently. He took Miss Tatum down to supper, but drank the governor's sparkling Moselle in gloomy abstraction; then he proposed that they should take a turn in the verandah before returning to the ball-room. Miss Tatum was nothing loath, so they went out.

A lovely night and a most romantic moon peeping from behind drifting masses of clouds, sometimes silvering the garden into almost the brightness of day, then leaving all dark and sombre. Algy, with his partner's little hand resting lightly on his arm, stood looking out on this scene. There was a silence for some minutes; the scene was impressive, and the silence rendered it more so.

This was Algy's receipt. 'Take a young lady who has been whirled round a well-lighted ball-room some scores of times to Strauss and Gungl's music by the same young gentleman; add to this some really genuine champagne and supplementary claret-cup; serve it up in a moonlit verandah, hanging to the same

young man's arm ; and it will be found cooked to a proper degree of susceptibility.'

'It is very lovely,' he said, looking up into the sky, and turning his face so that the moonlight fell across it with a good effect ; he had often studied this with the limelight on the stage, and knew that it caused his eyes to come out well.

'Beautiful !' from miss, in almost a whisper ; and as her gaze was turned heavenwards she could not help also noticing Algy's fine profile blanched into a delicate marble, and his large eyes looking wonderfully large just then.

'This time to-morrow I shall see it shining on the Thames from my dog-kennel in town.'

'*To-morrow ?* do you leave us to-morrow ?'

He was watching her narrowly, and saw a shade pass over her face ; it was disappointment.

'Yes,' he said, 'I must go back to the mill ; it would not do for a poor miserable devil like myself to have too long a spell of happiness ; it unfits one for the workaday world again. I—I already feel'—just enough of a sigh to be heard by Miss Tatum's attentive ears. 'Yes, I must go back to the grindstone.' You would think he was a galley-slave at least from the way he put his case. 'I shall think,' he went on, with the very quintessence of saddened melancholy in his voice, 'I shall think, to-morrow, when I see yonder light, of this place, of this hour, naturally'—here his voice slightly trembled—'and of something—I mean some one who—some one else.'

No answer, but he thought the hand that rested on his arm was heavier than it had been ; so he went on. 'There are some days, Miss Tatum, which we think of at times as forming oases in our life's desert. My visit at this house has been one to me. There are hours too, hours when tears rise in the heart and gather to the eyes almost involuntarily, and feeling is stronger than speech—its very intensity depriving us of giving expression to what—to what the heart would fain utter. Have—have I your permission to call this hour mine ? may I think of it, in after days, as I shall think of it, O, how often—may I then think of it as *mine ?*'

'You may, Mr. Bates,' in a tremulous whisper.

'Thank you ;' and it was natural that he should take her hand in his to give due force to his words ; natural enough, too, that he should hold it there beyond the time necessary to give it a gentle squeeze—shake, we mean.

There was another impressive silence, in which the moon

played an important part, or, as Algy would have expressed it, in theatrical parlance, 'did the leading business.' Somehow or other, too, Miss Tatum's hand was again held in his. Then, suddenly, 'Miss Tatum! Florence! for this once—' and at the passion that rang in his deep voice she felt her face burning and an odd choking sensation in her throat.

'I cannot bear this longer. I know how weak it is; but I cannot, *cannot* help myself. Florence, do you not see that I *love* you? Forgive me my weakness; pardon it as springing—as springing from the strength of my love. I did not mean to have told you this. How could the struggling unsuccessful author, the penniless, disappointed artist, who has seen the dream of his ambitious youth fade and die away under the blighting influence of—of dastard enemies, leaving him almost without a hope, how could such a man ask you to share his lot? Ay, even though he saw in you the realisation of his ideal, though since he has known you his thoughts have known none else; even then he could not tell you this. The very pride, which has been the chief obstacle to his success in life, prevented him. This foolish weakness, which made him forget his purpose for the moment, your noble nature will forgive, I know. Good-bye, Miss Tatum—I had rather not face the people inside just now. Will you think of me sometimes in after years, when—when you are happy, and I—Will you think of me then as one who staked his all on a vain hope which his sense of honour bade him give up, though it was to drive him forth again into the world a soulless vagabond? Good-bye. Ah! your glove, your glove, Miss Tatum! Good-bye, *for ever*. I could not stop in England, for then I might see you, and it—it—wouldn't do, you know.'

Pressing the hand that lay passive in his, he turned to go. Was it a sob he heard then, and his own name following on it in a little choking whisper? At all events, Algy thought it was, so he went back and stood looking down on her. She lifted her face, and he saw tears glistening on her eye-lashes: then he thought it was a 'safe thing.'

'How could you, how could you be so cruel? What do you take me for?'

A pause, during which he regarded her gravely. Then she looked up at him slyly. He held out his hand, and her little one came fluttering out to meet it. It was enough for Algy.

'Florence!' and he was drawing her towards him gently, while Miss Tatum's resistance thereat was not more than he was able to overcome.

Of course there was a regular row with the soapboiler papa. Over and above the fact of Algy's not having any money, Mr. Tatum had the greatest contempt for literary men, whom he stigmatised as a sort of people living by their wits, which, in his eyes, was a sin against respectability; for, as he argued, 'how could a man be worth anything who got his money in such a preposterous way? Cleverness—talent! O, I daresay; what do they bring him in? You're a little simpleton, child, to be taken in by such a fellow.'

Then the little simpleton flushed and stamped her little foot as she did brave battle for her lover. 'He was noble and honourable in everything. Though he loved her so, he was going away without even telling her of it, because he knew he was so poor. He *was*, papa.' And 'she would never, *never* marry any one, if not him;' and 'papa was very, very cruel,' and 'she lul—lul—loved Algy so dearly,' and 'he was so good and noble,' and 'she knew dear papa wouldn't break Flossy's heart;' and the flaxen ringlets were flung over papa's shirt-front, and the little lady laid down her head upon the crackling cambric as she went in for a 'good cry.'

So ultimately papa was obliged to give in, and Miss Tatum had her own way. Then, when on the next day Mr. Bates came out of the soapboiler's 'study,' after seeing the handsome sum the old gentleman intended to settle upon his daughter at once, and the still handsomer sum that would eventually come to her, he told himself that 'this was a better thing than the "Chumley business;"' then he gave a sigh to the memory of Miss Chumley. 'Poor Rose, wonder how she'll get on with old Levy! Ah, well, it's all for the best! Really most providential that I didn't get to the Hampstead-road so early that morning as I had intended. In that event she might have been the future Mrs. Bates, and I should have missed Florence. Poor Rose!'

The very morning after Algy's visit to Mr. Tatum's sanctum, Dick Winslow received the following note:

'Lyme House, Hants, Oct. 7th.

'DEAR DICK,—I am going to marry Miss Tatum on the 18th instant. Miss T., the future Mrs. B., has a settlement to the tune of a thou' per ann. You will see that I have done the bet within time. Don't trouble yourself about the ten fifties till convenient.

'Thine always,
'ALGY BATES.'

WHY THE PIFFLERS LOST THEIR RETURN MATCH.

‘WHAT on earth did you bring me here for?’ my friend Charlie Chetwynd said to me as we stood together in the drawing-room of Claverley Court, apart from the dancers, and listening to the ‘Lurline Quadrilles.’

‘You are an ungrateful duffer,’ I rejoined politely. ‘You are also a gentlemanly-looking man, and a stranger in this neighbourhood, with nothing to do. And it was from these two latter reasons that I introduced you here.’

‘But I want a pretty partner, and I can’t find one,’ said my friend, taking down his eyeglass in despair. ‘There’s nothing in the room—’

‘If you will look in the direction of the doorway,’ I rejoined quietly, ‘you’ll be reduced to proving your rule by an exception.’

Charlie’s eyes followed mine.

‘By Jove!’ he exclaimed — so loudly and suddenly that a nervous young gentleman in spectacles, who, by dint of a senior wrangler’s concentration of mind, had almost piloted himself through a quadrille, was now startled, and losing his presence of mind in the moment of victory, ignominiously plunged ‘La Poule’ into confusion.

‘Hush, Charlie!’ I remonstrated. ‘Your sporting habits are a drawback, in many ways, to your otherwise duly-subdued and refined bearing and conversation.’

‘You be hanged!’ answered Charlie. ‘I don’t think yonder bright “exception” looks as if she would like a man any the less for his being able to discriminate between Blair Athol and a butcher’s screw.’

‘Very likely not,’ said I; ‘the accomplishment in itself she would admire, no doubt, to the extent that it deserves. But if I introduce and recommend you—I have known Maud since she

was a girl—your attentions must be more refined than those of the hard-riding hero of a sporting novel.’

Chetwynd was quite indignant, and was commencing a retort; but his new divinity, as, ‘like a light, growing larger and clearer,’ she approached, seemed to absorb anger in admiring worship.

With a foil in the person of a not over-young and very stout lady, who hung heavy on the other arm of her escort, himself a man of aspect rather round than romantic, she seemed, my fancy told me as I gazed, a stately Olivia of the ‘Twelfth Night’ by the side of a Sir Toby Belch and an older but not less vivacious Maria.

I admired my own idea so much that I did not at first hear my friend eagerly questioning me:

‘Who is she—and who is that smirking, fat, fair, and forty George the Fourth style of woman, and the boorish-looking fellow between them?’

‘You ought to recognise the man,’ I replied. ‘He is Gumbleton—don’t you recollect him at school—always talking about cricket, and couldn’t play? The women are his *fiancée* and her aunt.’

‘Well,’ said Charlie, ‘I’ve left off being surprised at anything these twelve years—since I was fifteen.’ Charlie had a bad habit of applying to ordinary life the phraseology of the turf. ‘But to think,’ he went on, ‘of that splendid figure and thoroughbred style of action being wasted on a man who’s built like a bishop’s cob! Why the aunt there—look how she’s giggling—ought to be ashamed of herself, a woman of that age and size; she’d suit him to a T,’ said Charlie, carefully hand-capping her, as he called it, with the aid of his eye-glass. ‘What the deuce are you laughing at?’

‘At your way of expressing yourself, I suppose, or at the frightful mess that mild party in spectacles got his set into in “La Poule” over there,’ I rejoined.

‘Well, I can console myself with a flirtation, perhaps. Look! she’s sitting down, and the other two have left her,’ exclaimed Chetwynd. ‘Now’s the time—introduce me.’

I complied with his wish, and saw little more of my friend that evening. Charlie—he’s conceited enough about it—is a clever fellow. He seemed to insinuate himself into the good graces of Maud Marston with remarkable quickness; nor was his flirtation impeded by Gumbleton, who, not being an adept at dancing, devoted himself chiefly, with intervals of attention

to his other charge, to sundry potations of sherry in the supper-room.

Beneath the stars, still shining, but with somewhat of the look of *passé* beauties, and while the world was waiting for the dawn, we drove home, Chetwynd and I; and all the way Charlie poured into my ears a tale of sudden passion and concomitant difficulty and despair thwarting the course of true love, he wildly complained, with obstacles more difficult even than those usually thrown across that much-vexed current.

‘Her eyes,’ he rhapsodised, ‘are like the sea in summer, when the lights on it are always changing, and the changes are always lovely.’

I assented, and struck a vesuvian upon the splashboard.

‘She’s far away the finest filly I ever saw; and as for her marrying that fat, foolish, grovelling, guzzling, gormandising Gumbleton, why it’s my firm belief that she detests the idea as much as I do. How she enjoyed my quizzing her aunt—Maud’s aunt, as I would keep calling her relative, for the sake of repeating that exquisite name. She’s full of humour. What the devil *are* you laughing at?’

‘I—I was thinking of the ignominy of that mild party in spectacles. Certainly, Miss Marston has an infinite fund of—mischief.’

‘Well,’ said Chetwynd, ‘the long and short of it is that I am desperately in love with her—the ideal, almost, of my dreams; and you may sneer, but love does sometimes come, not with the gradual growth of yonder slow-brightening dawn’—he pointed, tightening the reins as he spoke, to where the pale blue sky was beginning to hint of the coming daybreak—‘but swift as its peer of the glowing tropics. Well,’ pursued Charlie, returning to matter of fact, ‘I tell you what, Jack, I shall write to her this very morning and propose to cut the Gordian knot of difficulty by an elopement. Of course, in requital for my honouring you with so important a confidence, you’ll help me if need arises.’

‘Of course,’ I answered, smiling.

All the rest of the way home, while the world around us was waking to its summer-day’s life of light and flowers and shining woods, Chetwynd was silent, ever and anon taking from and replacing in his mouth an extinct cigar.

He wrote his proposed letter from my lodgings, and, after dispatching it, subsided into a state of nervous anxiety, an intense abhorrence for anything to eat, a decided partiality for

anything to drink, and a most destructive fancy for a well-filled box of my particular Havana cigars.

I paid little attention to his proceedings, being engrossed myself with what I considered a very important task. This was no other than the getting up of an eleven to contend against the well-known cricketing-town of Battington, by which I, at the head of my club, the 'Peripatetic Pifflers,' had been, much to my chagrin, already worsted once this year.

The P.P.'s were determined upon revenge. Battington had been blatant upon the theme of its victory; and the main cause of Chetwynd's being now my visitor was the fact of my having desired to secure his assistance—he had been a 'Varsity' bat and bowler—in the second struggle. And now deep despair seized my soul, when I reflected that this sudden escapade of my friend's would probably be the cause of our second defeat, by depriving us of the aid of the famous Charlie Cambridge—such was Chetwynd's *nom de guerre* in the cricketing world.

But Fortune, who is said to delight in overthrowing the proud, seemed about to prove herself a consistent goddess by her behaviour to those conceited Battingtonians. To do this no doubt, she so managed matters that Charlie, within twenty-four hours from the dispatch of his letter, received a reply which, to use his own expression, derived from a reminiscence of one of poor Leech's pictures, 'hung a board round his neck and tickled him, thus disabled, with the straw of perverse misfortune.'

But he did not make this discovery until arriving at the end of the letter, of which, in his ecstasy during the first perusal, he favoured me with extracts.

"'It is like the strangeness of a dream,'" quoted Charlie; "'so short has been our acquaintance, so sudden the growth of love between us,'"—('Of love between us,' repeated my friend delightedly, and hurrying on), "'I fear, like Juliet, lest you should consider me too easily won, if I consent to an elopement.'" ('Bravo!' cried Chetwynd, jumping up from his chair.) "'I am like Lydia Languish—I long for the excitement of a runaway marriage, and hate the idea of the ordinary formal and ceremonious one. I should prefer abandoning my home by means of a rope-ladder.'"—('So you shall, and prettily your sylph's ankle will trip down it,' put in Chetwynd.) "'My niece knows that you have written to me'" ('niece—niece!' said my friend, pausing. 'She means aunt—she's agitated, poor thing!') "'She thinks we ought to see each other—best in some public place—to arrange matters.'" ('Quite like a mother

to her,' remarked Chetwynd; 'romantic in her youth, no doubt, she looked, or rather smirked it.') "I send you a kiss" (my friend raised the letter rapturously to his lips), "and sign myself by the name which your dear lips have so playfully conferred on me,"

MAUD'S AUNT.

"P.S.—You never would think we were in that relationship, would you?"

I do not know which of us, my friend or myself, underwent, at the close of this letter, the most violent change of countenance from the respective causes of amazement and amusement.

'Why,' gasped Charlie, 'they're the same name, and the aunt's got my letter. But it's absurd. Why, I dwelt throughout it upon her engagement to Gumbleton.'

I articulated an answer with some difficulty: 'It is the eldest who is engaged to Gumbleton.'

'What?' said Charlie, scarcely comprehending me; and then he added, 'Well, that explains all. But I remember distinctly, you said it was the niece who was engaged to him—I recollect your words—"Gumbleton, *fiancée*, and her aunt." One of your confounded pieces of chaff, I suppose, or a slip of the tongue, as you'll say. I see now how it was, you were always laughing in that unreasonable fashion.'

'Do you?' I answered. But Charlie was by this time re-perusing the letter with disgust equal to his former delight.

"Short acquaintance," "sudden love," he commented. 'Scarcely spoke a word to her; was introduced—didn't even catch the name; handed her a chicken at supper or part of one. "Easily won,"—should rather think so. "Elopement,"—not if I know it. "Lydia Languish,"—why she's five-and-thirty, if she's a day—daresay forty. "Rope-ladder." That's the best thing yet; fancy *me* waiting at the bottom of a rope-ladder for a woman of sixteen stone! "Have informed my niece of your letter." That's the unkindest cut of all. I think I see the fun in Maud's large eyes. What an utter fool she must think me!'

'Well,' he ended, breaking off, 'I see nothing for me but to run away from this Falstaffian female. I can't possibly have the face to meet her, especially as it's my mistake, and there is,' observed my friend rising and complacently looking at himself in the mirror over the mantelpiece—'there's some excuse for her proceedings.'

'Now, Jack, I'll tell you what—I'll write an explanatory letter to the real Maud; and you, in atonement for your sins, must manage to deliver it—can't trust the post; for I don't see

how to prevent the letter falling into the hands of the other. Meantime, for the present, I'll make myself scarce.'

'On one condition I'll help you,' was my reply. 'You must play with us to-day against Battington; it's five miles away, and you can get farther off to-morrow; it'll do you good too—distract your mind. It's nearly time to start now.'

'Well, you must do your best for me, then,' returned my friend. 'Five miles is far enough, I suppose. Gumbleton's future aunt doesn't play cricket, I should think, and there's no danger of my meeting her.'

'No,' I said, 'but Gumbleton does—plays against us to-day. You can have the satisfaction of bowling at him.'

'That would have decided it, an hour ago,' said Charlie. 'But, however, I will go.'

He went; and at the moment of his setting foot upon the Battington cricket-field, Charles Chetwynd, the lover in difficulties, vanished from our sight, and cricketing Charlie Cambridge took his place. Battington went in first—the match was a one-innings affair—and when Gumbleton came to the wickets, I saw a little extra 'devil' in the eye of Charlie, who was bowling from the other end. Gumbleton, before commencing operations, always spent five minutes in beating down imaginary hillocks between himself and the bowler, taking objectless constitutionals round his wicket, and staring at each fieldsman in turn, as if he wanted to identify him afterwards upon a criminal charge. I had, therefore, a good opportunity for obtaining moderate odds about his retiring in the first over, and, thereby, paid my travelling expenses.

Charlie's first ball did not realise my expectations: it shot on the leg-side, and smiting poor Gumbleton on the ankle-bone, just below a rather inefficient pad, caused him to limp during the remainder of the day. But the second whirled his leg-stump a yard into the air, and caused, of course, the adipose batsman to return, inglorious, to the tent. When the last of the Battingtonian wickets fell, the destruction of seven was credited to Charlie, and the total score was little over a hundred, a very small one when we considered the run-favouring state of the ground and the strength of batting talent arrayed against us.

We—the Piffers—began our innings with much hope of victory. But from the effects, perhaps, of dinner beverages, the P. P.'s, with one exception, came to the wickets, some but to remind us of the fate of Gumbleton, others to lead a precarious life with the reward of an occasional 'single,' and sooner or later

retired without having attained any mastery over the bowling. Charlie alone, having gone in first, remained. By elegant defence and forward play, by showy and almost inevitable cuts, by frequent leg-hits long and low—as leg-hits and hunters should be—by a six and a couple of fours, the result of an unluckily-trying over of slows, he rapidly brought up the score, till, with the tenth man at the opposite wicket, and Charlie facing the beginning of the over, it was within one of that of our opponents. Even at this exciting moment it flashed upon my mind how thoroughly English was the scene, and how worth a painter's while to portray.

The horizon, at its most distant point, was ridged by a faint contrast of blue hills (the waves, as it were, spellbound in their motion, of a giant's sea), and nearer, more boldly countered by dark lines and masses of wood, that, except where they gave upon that distant range of summits, ran like a fringe round the prospect. Flowing down the sides and from the feet of those far eminences came a stream of rich and shining acreage, which, at the gorge that broke the circle of the woods, debouched so as to suggest a comparison with a lake of green and golden waters. And these, where they undulated close around us, who were the centre-point of the scene, became waving wheat and bush-dotted grassland. Summer and sunshine had made everything their own; while distant hills and spires, and, clustering nearer round its wide church-tower, the irregularly-built village of Battington, told far and near of the life of the landscape; and we ourselves, a ring of sitting or standing groups amidst the white tents of the cricket-field—our faces riveted upon Chetwynd—gave the picture its finish of human interest.

The last fieldsman had just reached his place for the new over, when I heard the trampling of horses on the sward behind me, and, looking round, saw the cup of triumph, so to speak, dashed from the expectant lips of the Peripatetic Piffers. For at this moment there rode into the field, late spectators of Gumbleton's prowess, his *fiancée* and her aunt. I glanced back at Charlie, and saw that they had caught his eye just as the opposing bowler started to deliver the first ball of the over. The ball came straight as an arrow, and Chetwynd, excited by the sudden appearance of his dreaded *bête noire*, did not wait to play it. Rushing out for a blind swipe, he hit, as I expected, 'over' the ball, and lost his middle stump, to the accompaniment of a shout of victory, to which every Battingtonian on the field contributed his longest and loudest.

By the device of dodging behind the tallest men, he attempted, amidst the subsequent confusion, to reach the tent unobserved by the object of his alarm. But Battington was generous, and insisted upon making him conspicuous by cheering him; and I saw, with an internal convulsion, the stouter of the two ladies on horseback beckon him with her hand to approach them.

Hastily donning an outer garment brought by an officious admirer, poor Charlie obeyed the signal. I observed him approach, ruefully enough, the fair invader of his presence; I saw her greet him with wreathed smiles, while, ever and anon glancing at him from the other side of her relative, the real object of his passion gracefully reined-in her impatient bay thoroughbred.

'You see, after all, it is *I* who am obliged to seek you. But you expected, of course, that we should be here. Would you like to kiss my hand?' and the elder lady half extended to him that member—not a very shapely one.

Charlie shuddered. 'A little too public,' he faintly gasped, and encountered at this moment, to add to his confusion, the arch gaze of the owner's lovely companion.

'When is the elopement to take place?' continued his interlocutor; 'and have you brought a rope-ladder?'

Charlie was stammering some incoherent reply, when up came Gumbleton, still limping from the effects of his casualty.

'See, dear, this is Mr. Chetwynd's doing,' he said to the speaking lady.

'Mr. Chetwynd's!' returned the latter, suddenly changing her tone of address to the bewildered Charlie. 'I'll Chetwynd him! O, you cruel, heartless, ugly, malevolent creature!'

At this moment I stepped forward with my friend's last letter in my hand, and was in act to present it to Gumbleton's sympathiser.

'What *are* you about?' exclaimed Charlie, rushing at me.

'All right, man,' I rejoined. 'This letter is for the niece, is it not?'

'Of course,' replied my friend.

'Then I'll give it to the niece,' I interrupted, handing it up to Charlie's fat, fair, and forty tormentor.

Hereat that lady's fairer companion let her horse have his way, and rode off to a more distant position.

'If Mr. Chetwynd,' said the recipient of the letter to Charlie, who stood more confounded than ever—'if your second letter is meant to recall your first, you had better, since it has fallen into my hands, state the fact verbally to my aunt;' and she pointed

with her whip to her friend, by this time distant from her side.

‘What!’ exclaimed Charlie, a light breaking on him, ‘you don’t mean to say that *you* are the niece, after all, and she *not* the intended Mrs. Gumbleton.’

But amidst the laughter of us bystanders, he was off before the question could be answered.

This time, Charlie Chetwynd evinced reluctance rather to depart from, than to approach Miss Marston. Long time they stood together, till the cessation of cricket practice, and the darkness that came over the wide landscape round them, gave warning of departure. Explanation was probably being given him of the series of mistakes, in which, by, in the first instance, taking, naturally enough, the wrong persons for aunt and niece, he had become involved. With the old look of mischief in her large, now loving eyes, his partner of the past and of the future, told him how, in the first instance, she had amused herself carelessly enough with his error; and how, to punish him for some rude remarks upon her niece, she had carried on the delusion with the aid of her mirth-loving senior. Her father, she told him, had married very young, and she was the youngest daughter of his second wife, while Gumbleton’s *destinée* was the eldest offspring of the eldest son of the above-named parent. ‘Do you forgive me?’ she ended.

‘To you, of course,’ was Charlie’s answer, ‘I forgive anything: if you derive pleasure from teasing me, pray tease me again; my revenge for this will be wreaked elsewhere;’ and he turned his eyes towards me.

My explanation, however, of having taken part in the joke only during the first blush of its absurdity, and afterwards doing nothing more than watch its course, must have been found satisfactory; for Chetwynd’s claret and cigars have this very evening blended their influence with that of pretty Mrs. Chetwynd’s mirthful reminiscences, and inspired me to tell the story of the unexpected defeat which, little more than a year ago, made smaller the prestige of the Perambulating Piffers.

THE CRUISE OF THE APHRODITÉ.

‘Be you come for the “Half-rotted,” sir?’ Such was the question addressed to Gus Maltre and myself, as the train stopped, on an afternoon in September 1863, at the Harwich platform.

Now Gus and I had been rather soured by the latter part of our journey. We had started with every chance of comfort; and our long experience of the Great Eastern Railway had induced us to be very thankful for so remarkable a prospect. And for a time all had gone well. We had had no fish, single ladies, or old gentlemen in our carriage; the train was only two hours late, and we had beguiled the time with much pleasant conversation and tobacco. Our friend Marling had asked us to take a cruise with him in his schooner-yacht; and as we had always understood that she was the finest vessel that ever floated—‘not one of your gimcrack craft, but a thorough comfortable, sea-going schooner;’ as we knew Marling to be the most genial soul that ever lived—and withal, so good a sailor that his yacht bore the reputation of being handled better than any frigate in her Majesty’s navy—we had found much to talk over and to congratulate ourselves upon.

Gus had gone to look after the luggage, when a burly, thick-set, blue man, with a burly, thick-set, blue face, came up to me and asked the question—

‘Be you for the Half-rotted?’

‘No,’ said I, confidently, and in the innocence of my heart, but not without some wonderment at the names current in Harwich. At that moment Gus returned, to whom I repeated the question. He too wondered for a moment, and then burst into a loud laugh. ‘The Half-rotted!’ said he; ‘my opinion is that this concerns us; remember sailors are phonetic as to spelling. Here, my man!’

The blue man returned.

‘How do you spell it?’

The blue-faced being driven into a corner, scratched his head, but did not at first succeed in producing anything from it. At length he turned towards a distant corner, where lounged another blue mass, and called out—

‘Here, you Dick!’ You Dick lumbered up to where we stood, in a shamefaced sort of way, and sulkily touched his hat. He was a black-browed, sunken-eyed fellow, with a deep scar on his forehead, and would not at first sight have been taken for an amiable man; but he was too much for Gus, who sat down on a friendly packing-case, and held his sides in convulsions of laughter.

It was all a mystery to me. I looked from Gus to ‘you Dick,’ and from you Dick to Gus, in mystification. Gus at length took pity on me, and pointed at the cause of his laughter. I followed his finger, and the mystery was solved. On Dick’s breast was embroidered in red letters *APHRODITE*.

‘Didn’t I tell you they were phonetic?’ he gasped: ‘so they are; only instead of spelling according to sound, they sound according to spelling—“Aphrodité,” and “Half-rotted”—don’t you see?’ He went off into more convulsions, and very nearly fell under the engine. This time I joined him, to the disgust of our blue friend, who now stood revealed as Burrels, first-mate and chief disagreeable of Marling’s schooner.

‘Ah! I ain’t much of a scholar,’ he grumbled, ‘but that’s the way they spell that—that I dew know. Here, you Dick! can’t you take the gentlemen’s things?’ And Dick incontinently shouldered our four heavy portmanteaus (each of which had been charged for as extra luggage, as being overweight), and led the way out of the station.

A short pull took us on board the *Aphrodité*, which lay with her folded white wings, like a beautiful sea-bird at rest on the water. Marling was at the gangway to welcome us, looking, in his rough pilot-coat and tarpaulin hat, every inch a sailor; while his easy, graceful bearing and gentle manners equally proclaimed him every inch a gentleman; and, in fact, he was both—a gentleman-sailor, which is what no other country than England can produce. We had much to talk of. Marling first insisted on showing us the various improvements he had made in the vessel—how he had taken two feet off the mast; how he had replaced his old standing-rigging by wire; how he had ‘shifted his weights,’ so that she was to sail twice as well. And then we had to examine the new patent anchor—(which I am bound to

say was very ugly, and not at all like the emblem of hope we had been used to), and the improved binnacle, and a most complicated American windlass—all of which we duly admired, in the most profound ignorance of their merits. We were better able to appreciate the comfort and refinement of the cabins, which were a succession of luxurious boudoirs, panelled with looking-glasses, rich with crimson silk, and surrounded with couches, soft and inviting. There were three sleeping-cabins—one quite aft, opening on to the companion, and appropriated to my use; next to that the main-cabin, serving as dining and drawing-room, and occupying the whole breadth of the vessel; and then two more sleeping-berths, for Marling himself and Maltbyre. Forward of those, again, were the pantry and the fore-castle, where the crew (six in number, with Burles), lived and slept. I have, as will be seen, a reason for describing the situation of the cabins. Had they been differently arranged, or had I slept in any other than the aftermost, I might never have lived to write this account.

Early on the next morning we weighed anchor, and dropped down with the ebb before a light breeze, only just enough to give sufficient command of the ship to take her out of the harbour—the entrance to which, as Marling informed us, is one of the nastiest pieces of navigation he knows. We were all there, standing together, Marling steering, and were talking with the most pleasing anticipation of our prospects in the trip we had just commenced, which was nothing less than a cruise to the Mediterranean. We spoke low, for Marling had not let the men into the secret of our destination, being sure, as he said, that if he had done so, the crew would have left him to a man, so averse are the sailors of these parts to long voyages. He proposed to tell them only when we should be well clear of the land, when they must perforce reconcile themselves to it.

For several days nothing of note disturbed our enjoyment. The weather was delightful, though somewhat cold; the wind favoured us, and our only occupation the livelong day was inhaling ozone, eating and drinking, and pitying the lot of the fog-beridden Londoners we had left behind us. On the fifth day, Marling called the men together, and told them he was bound for 'the Straits' and beyond, and hoped they would do their duty and behave well, which, he said, would not be forgotten in their wages on arriving home again. The announcement of a long voyage appeared to produce a very unfavourable impression among the crew, who looked at each other sulkily, and the ill-favoured Dick even made a few steps forward, and

glanced furtively from out the corners of his eyes at Marling, as though about to speak ; but apparently he thought better of it, for he walked forward again with the rest of the crew, who collected together on the windlass, talking over the matter. Burrles was steering ; but his eye wandered ever and anon from the binnacle to the group forward, where loomed the gigantic Dick, taller by a head and shoulders than the rest. At last he spoke—not to Marling, but to me, whom, as being the most essential landsman of the party, he had taken under his especial patronage—

‘That there Dick is a scholar, he is—he can read and write.’

I did not see the application of the remark, so said nothing ; and Burrles relapsed into an alternate contemplation of the crew and the binnacle. Burrles was a dull, heavy, slow-moving, Suffolk-bred animal, but there was, as I thought, something very honest about his face. Again he spoke—

‘I don’t know much about that there, I don’t. He come from the North Country, he dew—Liverpool or somewheres.’

I puzzled in vain over the meaning of these enigmatic assertions, and got out of the difficulty by asking what he thought of the weather. He gave a low-spirited look to windward, and replied that he ‘didn’t like the look of that bank, he didn’t.’ This was pleasing and reassuring, for, having been instructed in the ways of Burrles, I knew that in all his opinions he was so invariably wrong, that he was as good a guide as if he had been always right. Marling was quite pleased, when he came up to take his observation, to learn that Burrles was desponding, and foretold a long spell of fair weather and favourable winds. And so indeed it turned out.

The next morning the wind fell, and for two days we had almost a calm, and the vessel lay rolling with the long Atlantic swell, making scarce any way at all. Then a fresh breeze sprung up, and ‘we took in our kites’ and flew before it at the rate of ten knots an hour, the *Aphrodité* going, as Marling said, ‘as comfortably as an old shoe.’

On the following Thursday night—the wind was still right astern, and we were off the coast of Spain—I was lying asleep in my berth, when I was all at once dimly conscious of being disturbed in my rest by a trampling and scuffling. I was dreaming of a battle, and heard shouts and oaths, and cries for help ; and I thought I was looking on, but with a sort of feeling that I ought to take a part in the fray. Then for a moment I fell off from my dream, and sunk again to sleep ; but soon I heard another fight and a louder shout : and this time I half

awoke, still with that same uncomfortable feeling that I was somehow concerned in the struggle. Another shout. This time I quite awoke. The shout was repeated. There was a trampling in Marling's cabin, mixed with curses and blows. I jumped from my berth and rushed forward. For a moment I stood dazed and confused at the scene before me. Marling lay half out of his berth, bleeding from a wound in his head, while over him stood two men, one holding a lantern, and the other binding him with a rope. I rushed forward and planted a blow, straight out from the shoulder, on the ear of the man with the lantern. Never shall I forget the sensation of devilish pleasure with which I felt my fist go home. He fell like an ox, with his head in the fender, and I was turning to the other man, when I was suddenly seized from behind in a grasp of iron. In a second, I was down on my back; and, looking up, I saw over me, the diabolical face of Dick, who was kneeling on my chest. Uttering the most frightful imprecations, he began to tie my hands together. I struggled hard; but such was his weight that I was powerless; and in a very short time I was lying on the floor, bound hand and foot. Then, for the first time, I tried to gather my ideas together. In vain. I was amazed; my brain was in a whirl; I could not take in the events of the last few minutes. But my eyes fell on the man I had knocked down; and I felt a savage pleasure to see that the blood was trickling down his forehead, and that he lay quite motionless.

Dick, having secured Marling, now came back to me and shook his fist in my face, with a scowl that rendered his features so incredibly repulsive, that I involuntarily shut my eyes, not from fear, but from repulsion. The two then carried me into my berth, and locked the door which separated me from Marling. I opened my mouth to speak; but Dick broke in without giving me time:

'None of your jaw. I tell you what it is; we don't mean to go to the Straits; and we've just taken the ship into our own hands.—D'ye hear?'

At this I broke out:

'You infernal scoundrel! you shall suffer for this when we get to England. It is mutiny.'

Here I stopped, conscious of having said too much. A grin of satisfaction overspread the ruffian's face, and he turned to his companion:

'There, Bill, you hear what he says: you'd best have taken my advice. Dead men tell no tales.'

With this they left me in darkness. I lay there till morning, with the hard cords chafing my wrists and ankles, unable even to turn over—for they had lashed my arms to the stanchions—and trying to frame for myself some explanation of the scene I had just gone through. I could hear Marling groaning in his cabin, and occasionally speaking as if to a second person, from which I inferred that he was guarded. Gus Maltre and Burles I had not seen or heard; and I supposed that they too must be secured. I felt certain that Burles was not one of the mutineers.

At length a pale ray of light showed me that morning was come. Soon after, I heard them changing the watch on deck, and I could distinguish that a discussion was being held among them as to plans. They did not seem all to agree together. I heard Dick speaking:

‘So you’re frightened now, are you? You talked big enough about taking the ship back to England; and now, when I’ve done all the dirty work, you turn out a set of cowards, damn you!’

Then I heard another voice:

‘We ain’t no more frightened than what you are; but what are we to do when we get to England? It’ll be all found out. If the governor was to die, we should swing for it, we should.’

‘I tell you what, mate—we won’t go to England.’

Then followed some conversation in too low a tone for me to catch, but which appeared to satisfy them; a voice, however, began:

‘But we are so shorthanded: four of us ain’t enough to work the ship.’

‘We’ll have that fine gentleman out of the after-cabin, and make him work double tides. We owe him one for damaging our mate.’

This was agreed to at once; and shortly afterwards Dick himself came and unbound me.

‘Now, you sir! we mean to make a sailor of you, and you may thank your stars for it. Only mind, if you attempt any tricks, overboard you go. Now then, move along, will you?’

I made no answer, but walked before him up the companion-ladder.

‘Now just you go up to the cross-trees, and send down the topsail.’

I glanced around. The crew were looking sullenly at me. It was useless to resist; and I went forward without a word,

and began my ascent up the rigging of the mainmast. The vessel was rolling heavily in the Atlantic swell, and as I got higher, the motion got worse, until, when I reached the cross-trees, and mounted them, clasping the mast, I felt quite dizzy and ready to fall off at every lurch. My hands were bleeding in several places. I dared not look below, but I heard Dick's voice :

‘Higher up ! cast off the halyard and lacing.’

I looked up, and saw nothing but the tapering topmast, bending with the pressure of the topsail, and the truck against the sky. A film seemed to come over my eyes. But I felt a kind of strange pride in doing my task. I clung with arms and legs to the mast, and crept slowly upwards. It seemed to me that I was there for hours, rocking to and fro, now upright for an instant, now overhanging the sea till the horizon seemed to close in over my head. I found the end of the lacing ; I found the halyard, and untied the knots ; then I grasped at the sail, bellying out and flapping in the wind. Again and again it slipped from my grasp. I tore my nails to pieces with the coarse canvas, but at length I mastered it. Perilous as was my situation, I could not forbear a feeling of pride when I saw it hauled flapping down to the deck. I slipped down by the stay again, my hands bleeding, and my head still swimming in dizziness.

‘Now go forward and keep a look out ; and if you move aft the foremast, you’ll just have a rope’s-ending, mind you that.’

I went and sat on the windlass, while Dick and two of the crew went below and ate their breakfast. They had broken open the spirit-locker, and had got a bottle of curaçoa, which they drank over their breakfast, with remarks which at any other time would have afforded me much amusement. But I was too much occupied with my own thoughts to heed them much. The situation was not a pleasant one to contemplate, and the prospect before me still less so. What their intentions were, I could not imagine ; but I heard much disjointed talk of rich prizes, and burning ships, and making heaps of money, which puzzled even more than it alarmed me. It was absurd to suppose that they intended to turn pirates. In the first place, there were no arms on board, except two fowling-pieces, and scarcely any ammunition at all. We were steering, too, as I had noticed on coming on deck, due north—directly back to England ; and altogether I was quite unable to give any intelligible meaning to the few disjointed phrases I could hear. What galled me most was the idea

of being made the menial of such stupid brutes as I knew our crew to be. But Dick was evidently not only a desperate character, but a shrewd plotter. I saw with rage that, although, as compared with Marling, Burreles, and Maltre, who were doubtless confined in their cabins, I was comparatively free, still that I was powerless to do anything; for to have reached either of them I must have gone aft the whole length of the vessel in full view of the steersman, to the companion, or else through the fore-castle, where the rest of the men were assembled.

All day long I was made to remain on deck, and to do the hardest work of the ship; and as we were beating up against a head-wind by short tacks, I was hauling aft the fore-sheet, and easing it off every five minutes. Luckily, I had often done for pleasure what I was now forced to do of necessity, and I got through my duties to the satisfaction of my new masters, though not without some threats of a 'rope's-ending,' which made my blood boil. I kept my temper, however, though I vowed in my heart that I would yet take a signal vengeance on Dick, and I nursed the hope that at night I might be able to penetrate into Marling's cabin. Alas! at night I was taken below by Dick himself, and again securely lashed into my berth; I saw then how utterly helpless I was, and positively cried with vexation; but yet, so tired was I with the unaccustomed labour I had gone through, that in half an hour I fell asleep, and never awoke till I felt myself shaken by a rude hand, and was once more made conscious of my situation by seeing the repulsive face of Dick bending closely over me.

'Now then, just turn out and read this; and look sharp and give me what's written there for the skipper.'

I read the paper, which contained these words: 'Charcoal-plaster—the wounds to be hermetically closed.' I could not understand it.

'You are to get it out of the medicine-chest, for the skipper's cuts; and look smart about it.'

I looked through the chest which the ruffian had brought with him, and picked out the only plaster I could find.

I was immediately sent on deck again; but I could not get the word 'charcoal-plaster' out of my mind. What could it mean? At last it struck me that it must have been intended to convey some meaning to me alone. But what? I puzzled over it again and again. All at once it flashed upon me. I went straight to Dick, who was watching me, and for the first time spoke to him, and asked if I could have my coat.

‘Now, look here : I’m master here now, and if you want anything, you must touch your hat and call me “sir.”’

I repressed my indignation, and, flinging my hat on the skylight, repeated my request, though the ‘sir’ positively stuck in my throat. The wretch grinned horribly.

‘That’ll do ; you can go and get it.’ Then turning to the steersman, ‘Bill, keep your eye on him ; he’s going for his coat.’

I went down the companion, at the foot of which, on the port side, was the door of the sail-cabin, in which were also kept the deck-coats and a small supply of charcoal for lighting the cabin-stove. I managed to fill the pockets of my coat with charcoal, and, returning on deck, walked forward again to the windlass.

I was again kept hard at work all day, while the men passed the time smoking and talking in the cabin. At six o’clock they sat down to tea in the forecabin. Now the forecabin was warmed by a stove, the smoke of which was carried off by a small chimney which rose just before the foremast. Like all sailors, they had a wholesome hatred of fresh air, and had drawn the hatch over the hatchway leading to the deck ; it was not quite close, however, and I could see one of them through the opening. When they had finished their tea, they lit their pipes and lay about on the lockers, talking of their plans in a low tone of voice. Soon one of them went off into a doze, where he lay, and the conversation flagged and very shortly stopped altogether. Now was my opportunity. I had carefully kept over to leeward, so as to keep the sail between me and the steersman ; but I now ostentatiously came over to windward, as if to look out to sea ; then going back again, I rapidly took off my coat and stuffed it noiselessly into the crevice of the hatchway ; I had previously taken out all the charcoal, and I now dropped it, bit by bit, down the chimney, and then put on the cover, which hung by a chain to the side. Breathlessly I awaited the result. My only fear was, that one of them should awake before the fumes of the charcoal began to work. I heard no sound. Now for the first time I saw what I had undertaken, and thought with horror that I might not only stupefy, but not improbably kill them. A cold sweat stood on my brow at the thought. I felt inclined to abandon my plan ; but I remembered Dick’s insolence. I thought of Marling, too, lying bound in his cabin, and I resolved to persevere. For at least ten minutes I waited, and then, withdrawing a corner of the coat, I put my head cautiously into the opening. A bluish vapour filled the cabin. The man I had knocked down

was lying in his berth with a bandage round his head ; his hands were clenched, his mouth open, and his tongue protruding. The other three were lying on the lockers, as though dead, and their pipes had fallen on the floor. The door of the cabin was shut. I took all this in at one glance. Replacing the coat, I again went over to windward, in sight of the steersman. I thought with dread that I had already perhaps taken four lives. I could feel my heart beating against my breast, but I ostentatiously looked out ahead, and returned leisurely to my place. Once out of his sight, I tore away the coat, pushed open the hatch, and dropped lightly into the cabin. The atmosphere was intolerable. Not one of the four men stirred, though I almost touched them. I caught up a knife, opened the door, and came to Gus Maltys's cabin. It was locked, but there was no time to lose. I put my foot against the door, and my back against the opposite bulkhead, and it flew open. Gus was lying bound in his berth, and looked up in alarm. With a gesture I quieted him, and with two strokes of the knife cut the ropes that bound him. He started up, and we turned to leave the cabin, when a shadow obscured the door, and Dick stood before me. He looked stupid and dazed. I thought of my humiliation of the afternoon, and, rushing at him, struck him between the eyes. He reeled, but caught my arm. We closed, but he had already lost his balance, and, bracing every nerve in my body, I threw him heavily, and remembering with savage glee a maxim of the prize-ring, fell on him as heavily as I could. He lay motionless. All this had passed in a moment, and Gus only came to my help in time to find me kneeling on my prostrate foe. I had kept hold of the knife during the struggle; and my passions were so aroused that, rather than let him escape, I should have used it, I am certain. I now gave it to Gus. 'Quick—go and free Burtles and Marling!' He disappeared, and in two minutes I had tied Dick's hands together behind his back, with the very rope from which I had freed Gus, and exactly in the same way as I had been bound myself. The ruffian seemed stupefied, and offered but little resistance. Meantime I heard a scuffling in the fore-castle, and leaving my prisoner, I found Burtles and Gus each securing his man, while the wounded sailor was looking on stupidly from his berth. My first emotion was thankfulness that all the men were alive; and leaving them, I hastened into Marling's cabin. I found him trembling with excitement.

'God bless you, my dear fellow!' said he. 'You understood, then. But you have had a fight for it: is anybody hurt?'

I soon reassured him ; and after putting our prisoners, including the steersman, whom Burles had secured meantime, each into a separate cabin, we held a council. Marling laid all the blame on Dick, giving as his reason that his Suffolk men were much too dull and heavy to have conceived such a plot, or even to have executed it, except under crafty leadership ; and he attributed their acquiescence in Dick's schemes to the fact that, when once the first blow had been struck, they were too stupid to know what else to do than to support him. It seemed not improbable ; and it was resolved to release the crew on their promise to return to their duty—and the rather so, that without them we had not enough hands to work the ship. So the three men were brought into the cabin ; and when Marling spoke a few words to them, pointing out the serious nature of the crime of which they had been guilty, and promising to overlook it, if they would at once return to their duty, the men hung their heads sheepishly, and at once undertook everything that was required—indeed rather, as I thought, with an air of relief at being out of conspiracy again. So they were released and sent forward, Dick alone being kept bound and confined in Gus's cabin, and him Marling was determined to hand over to justice on the first opportunity. We all sat up for the rest of the night, talking over the startling events in which we had just borne a part. In the morning, land was announced, which Marling said must be the Isle of Ushant, and he resolved, more especially as the weather looked threatening, to go into Brest and hand over Dick to the authorities there. At twelve o'clock we cast anchor opposite the town, and were boarded by the quarantine officers and the English consul, to whom we made known our situation, and the fact that we had a prisoner to deliver over to the authorities. The consul, a middle-aged man of gentlemanly appearance (who had been made a K.C.B. by the English government for his services in the business of the French Treaty of Commerce), at once sent ashore, with a note to the port-admiral, for a file of gendarmes, and informed us that he had had much trouble of late with runaway sailors. ' You see that rakish vessel there, with two funnels?—that is the famous Florida. She has been here repairing for some time, and her captain has been using every means, both fair and foul, to fill-up the number of his crew, which is much weakened, and I have had nothing else to do but to prosecute runaway sailors, who had been tempted by the high pay offered to desert their own ships for the Confederate cruiser. She has been ready for sea several days, but

we are informed that she is awaiting the arrival of the second-mate, who has been sent to Liverpool to get men. She will have to wait a long time, for the port-admiral has ordered that neither the mate nor the men shall be allowed to join her when they do arrive, and every packet that arrives is searched to see if they are on board.'

The boat with the gendarmes was now seen approaching, and Dick was led on deck with his hands still tied behind him. The consul started on seeing him, drew a paper from his pocket, and glanced rapidly over it.

'Why! that's the very man!' said he. 'The mate of the Florida, for certain. See—"height about six feet and a quarter; English; a large scar on the left side of the forehead"—no doubt of it. A very good idea of his to come in a private yacht. But you were bound for the Mediterranean, you say?'

'Well,' replied Marling, 'I intended at first to come into Brest for fresh provisions, but the northerly wind tempted me past.'

'Yes, yes, I see. If you had come in, I have no doubt you would have lost every man of your crew, as another English yacht did last week.'

One of the men now came up. 'I can tell you something about it, sir. When we rounded Ushant, and he found the governor warn't agoing in, he used to talk to us about the Florida, and said we should get 10*l*. a month pay, and prize-money besides. And then we didn't like going up the Mediterranean; so at last he talked, and talked, and talked us over into taking the ship back; and we was to dodge about Ushant till the Florida come out, and them as liked was to join her. But I'm a married man, and I only joined 'em when it was all done, because I didn't like to leave 'em in the lurch; but I'm glad it's all over, I am.'

Dick had not opened his mouth; but his eye had wandered again and again to the Florida, as though measuring the distance between us. He now advanced to the gangway, and, his hands being tied, the gendarmes stood up to assist him into the boat. He stepped on to the first step of the ladder, then stopped; the gendarmes came close together under him, taking his arms; when suddenly he threw himself straight out, head-foremost, and in an instant disappeared into the sea, carrying the gendarmes with him, and capsizing the boat. All three disappeared, while the boatman held on by the painter, and scrambled up the side of the vessel. Then followed a scene of confusion. The tide

was running three knots an hour ; and the gendarmes reappeared almost immediately twenty yards astern. Two men now instantly jumped into our own boat, rowed towards them, and pulled them into the boat, more dead than alive. Then these pulled about, looking for Dick. He was nowhere to be seen ; his hat alone, floating far down the stream, told the tale. We watched it in silence. It passed close to the Florida, and, strangely enough, was picked up (as I saw through my glass) by one of her crew with a boathook. For some time the men continued the search for Dick ; but we all felt that it was useless ; for there was little hope even for the strongest swimmer with his hands tied behind him in such a current as that. The consul went ashore to make a statement of the facts, and took with him the gendarmes, who looked very rueful, with their long boots full of water, and their clothes wet through.

The Florida left the port that afternoon. The consul came on board the next morning, with a letter addressed to Marling, which he said had been brought back by her pilot. It was without signature, and ran thus : ‘ Dick has arrived quite safe, and thanks Mr. Maltre for his knife, the gendarmes for his liberty, and the tide for his hat.’ Gus Maltre, like an idiot, had left his knife in his cabin.

WANTED—A WIFE, WITH MONEY.

CHAPTER I. A LOVER'S DREAMS.

‘THE world is full of wants. Where will you find the man—or woman either—who doesn’t want something? Tell me that, Freddy Bent.’

A big wave struck the foundation of the pier, lapped idly against the steps, and sent a light shower of reminders to the gentleman who said this that he would do well to mount higher. He was not in any hurry to accept the warning; he took the cigar from his lips and stared down at the shining steps as though he had been a modern Canute waiting to read a lesson to his followers. He was a tall gentleman, with black hair and moustaches, features pale but well cut, and gray eyes at once keen and indolent.

‘Come up on deck, old fellow,’ responded Freddy Bent, ‘or one of your wants will be dry clothes. Look out, Carisford, there’s another coming.’

Sir Guy Carisford, thus apostrophised, raised his head slowly. He saw distant sails, tiny sheets of gleaming white in some sudden sunbeam; ripples of foam on the blue water far away; crags shining coppery red in the evening light, and the muscular figure of his friend Freddy Bent leaning carelessly over the chains of the pier.

‘What is your want, David?’ said Sir Guy.

Freddy laughed.

‘Haven’t you forgotten that? I’m not like David now, Carisford.’

‘No, it would take a good many years of sheep-feeding in the wilderness to develop all that muscle and bronze. I asked a question, David.’

‘What is my want? Rather what isn’t it, Guy? Well,

principally I think it is that beautiful hazy uncertainty and delusion, a place under government.'

'Tshaw !'

Sir Guy moved up the steps, and began to walk up and down speculatively.

'From bare boards to matting, from matting to carpet and greatness, Freddy, or to be made a queen's messenger ; that is your want. Never fear, you'll get it in time. Now for mine. Isn't it written on my forehead ?'

'No ; but I can tell you what it ought to be. You should marry, Guy Carisford.'

'Exactly. So I would if I could find a wife with the requisite qualifications.'

'Meaning—'

'Meaning money, Freddy Bent.'

'Money is a good thing,' said Freddy, 'but—'

'Love is better, eh, young Corydon ?'

'Yes.'

Sir Guy stopped in his walk and flung his cigar into the sea.

'I wonder what it's like—that stuff that very young boys and girls profess to feel before they get married. Tell me five years hence, Freddy. Men and women marry, and the world goes on, a jaded old mill-horse but game to the last, so far as the wheel is concerned ; but how many marriages do you think have any love in them ? No, no ; it's a mutual-benefit association, old fellow. What you haven't got you want, and must look for a wife who has it.'

'You don't mean all that, Guy ; you know you don't.'

'But I do mean it, David. It was impressed upon me in my cradle, and given to me in my pap—if ever I took the compound. My father mortgaged his acres and spent the money right royally ; and I was brought up to marry an heiress. Why shouldn't I ?'

But Freddy was thinking of a time long ago when this man nursed him through a sharp illness as tenderly as a woman could have done ; and he did not answer. You see he was romantic, and thought it a horrible thing for a man to aim deliberately at marriage for money.

'Look there, Freddy,' said Sir Guy, 'that little pink boat about marks the spot we plunged from this morning. What a lot of muffs the bathers are here ! but they don't come to bathe. I saw one great fellow tottering out with a rope in his hand.'

You and I have seen some swimmers in our time, haven't we? Come, Freddy, this is getting stale.'

The two gentlemen passed through the toll-gate towards the end of the esplanade. The road was thronged with carriages, and they had to wait a little before they could cross to get to the hotel. While they waited, one in the line of carriages stopped, and Freddy Bent ran up to it.

Sir Guy leaned against the iron partition watching his friend, and I am afraid that the curl of his handsome lip was a little sarcastic. Freddy seemed so very much in earnest about everything; and there he was talking and laughing as if his whole heart were in it, as a pale glove was held out to him, and a pleasant young face under a straw hat smiled down upon him.

'The Saltouns, I suppose,' said Sir Guy, when the carriage had passed on.

'Yes, they do the thing in style, you know; a house in its own grounds—not much of grounds, by the way, to speak of. I say, you can't dine yet; let's have a climb over the rocks.'

Sir Guy shrugged his shoulders slightly.

'Thank you—I've outgrown that sort of thing. These Saltouns, Freddy; two young ladies, a papa and mamma, so far as I could see. But the young ladies are not sisters, only cousins. Which is Miss Saltoun, the heiress? the one who spoke to you last?

'Yes. What do you know about them?'

'Simply that I came down here to marry Miss Saltoun.'

Freddy recoiled a step and stared at his companion.

'That is, of course, if I could persuade her to have me,' added Sir Guy calmly.

'You?' stammered Fred. 'You don't even know her.'

'No, but I hope to do so.'

'May one ask how?'

'Certainly. Through your means, David.'

'I'm—I'm afraid I can't promise, Sir Guy.'

The baronet put his hand on Freddy's shoulder and smiled.

'Well, go for your walk, David. You will be late for dinner.'

Freddy turned away in his perplexity and walked a few steps. But Sir Guy and he had been friends for many years, and Freddy was soft-hearted. The baronet was a great man in his estimation, as, indeed, he was in the estimation of others. Matchmaking mammas were affectionately disposed towards him,

notwithstanding that report said he was an embarrassed man. Report might lie, and if not, he was a baronet; he contrived to live in society, and would doubtless contrive to support a wife. Men of mark looked after him when he passed, with interest and curiosity. If report told the truth, how did he live? He was seen everywhere; he had travelled; he must spend money. There was only one solution of the problem whispered occasionally by daring lips; did he gamble? But Sir Guy only smiled when the whisper reached him; no, he never gambled; he practised the strictest economy, and took the best possible care of his affairs, that was all. He had no taste for vice in any form: he liked all that was good and honourable and upright; only he was straitened for means, and he had been brought up to marry an heiress, and clear his estate.

When Freddy Bent had walked those few steps he repented, turned back, and took his friend's arm.

'We won't quarrel, old fellow.'

'No, David.'

And Sir Guy's tone had a certain musical kindliness in it which Freddy had heard before, and fancied he understood.

'You like to paint yourself in ugly colours, Guy. I was a fool to be touchy; but you see I shouldn't like Alice Saltoun to fall a victim to a—fortune-hunter. I'll get you the introduction, and I'll warn her against you.'

'As what?'

'As a man with no heart,' said Freddy, laughing. 'And then if you should fall in love—'

'Hush, David; that's a stupid way of speaking. I'm not going to fall in love with anybody: don't believe in it. I'm only going to try for a wife, that's all—with money. But you don't think that I shouldn't be good to her, do you?'

'Carisford, you are thirty; six years older than—'

'Five-and-twenty, believe me; that has been my age for the last five years. Postpone your walk, David; I take your offer. You shall introduce me to Saltoun *père*, and we'll talk about the Colonial Restriction Bill, or how the last gridiron fared in Committee, or some other weighty matter on which we are both profoundly ignorant, and consequently profoundly wise. And now let us dress and dine. Wasn't there a concert to be walked through?'

CHAPTER II. FREDDY BENT MAKES A BLUNDER.

‘SIR GUY, and once again Sir Guy!’ said Mrs. Saltoun to herself. ‘A fortnight ago we did not even know the man, and now this is the third riding party, to say nothing of walks and boating excursions, which keep me in perpetual terror. Where are you bound for, young people?’ she added, through the open window.

‘The downs, mamma.’

‘The downs! Well, you know best, of course, but there’s nothing to see there except a big goose-pond, is there?’

‘No, nothing to see. I wish you would come too. A good breezy gallop would freshen you up for the day.’

‘I daresay, Charlotte. I’ll take it vicariously, my dear, if you please. Sir Guy will return to luncheon with you, of course?’

The baronet took off his hat, with an expression of regret that he had letters to write, and should be obliged to go back to the hotel.

‘She never asks me,’ murmured Freddy, in an aside to Miss Saltoun.

‘Because she knows it isn’t necessary.’

‘Give me a minute or two, Alice,’ said Freddy in a low tone. ‘There is no speaking to you in these days, and I have something to say.’

‘Let them go first, then, and mind the hurdy-gurdies.’

Sir Guy saw the little manœuvre and made no effort to change his position. He was very thoughtful and grave, and there was no trace in his manner of the careless nonchalance which had offended Freddy Bent a fortnight ago. When they got away from the streets, the hurdy-gurdies, and German bands, and performing monkeys, and reached the open common, he might have fallen back to join the two in the background, according to custom, but Sir Guy did not do this. Charlotte Saltoun spoke to him, and he roused himself to answer, but was astonished to find how the necessity irritated him. A great level down lay before them, and in the distance a low line of hills, all purple and gold in the sunlight; but it was not their beauty that made the baronet thoughtful. He was wondering what Freddy Bent had got to say to Alice Saltoun. Was it possible that Fred had any such views as his own, after all; or was it, as he had believed hitherto, nothing but a boy-and-girl

friendship? Anyhow Sir Guy caught himself condemning it. He was anxious and uneasy; his usual composure and self-possession were unattainable; and polite as his companion found him, he wished more than once that she was a hundred miles away.

‘Here’s mamma’s goose-pond,’ said Charlotte Saltoun suddenly, as the whole flock swept flapping and screaming across the path. ‘And now I wish those geese were all swans, for my horse isn’t going to stand that. Don’t trouble, Sir Guy; I shall manage very well.’

Sir Guy looked after and acquiesced, only following at a slower pace than hers, and uttering a low vituperation against the goose-pond. He did not know that he should feel positively friendly towards it when he came back.

‘Charlotte is a perfect horsewoman,’ said Miss Saltoun, ‘and your friend knows what he is about, Freddy.’

‘Tell me what you think of him, Alice,’ said the young man abruptly.

Miss Saltoun sent a curious glance into his face and laughed.

‘I think, Freddy, that he would look better if he cut off his moustache.’

Freddy uttered a hasty ejaculation, and then went up close to Alice.

‘You never speak in that light way to Carisford,’ he said, reproachfully.

‘I haven’t known him quite so long as I have known you, Freddy Bent.’

‘That’s true. We have always been on good terms, Alice, haven’t we?’

‘To be sure we have; I hope we always shall be. What’s the matter, Fred?’

‘I don’t know. I don’t want you to lose your heart to Carisford, Alice.’

The expression of Miss Saltoun’s face ought to have warned Freddy that he had better be quiet, but he was looking down, and did not see it.

‘Of course your wishes would be sufficient in any case. May I ask why you express them?’

‘Because he has no heart to give in return.’

‘What an uncomfortable state of things! I suppose you mean that he is already appropriated?’

‘No, I don’t.’

‘Then he has been engaged, and *she* is dead, or has jilted him. What a shame!’

Freddy shook his head.

‘Alice, Carisford is a very good fellow, and my friend, but—’

‘A very friendly part you seem inclined to act,’ she retorted, turning upon him with a little scorn. ‘Did you ever hear the aspiration, “Save me from my friends!” Freddy Bent? If you don’t take your hand from my bridle, I’m afraid I shall be obliged to hurt it. You and I know how we stand, of course, but the rest of the world may not be so wise.’

It was just at this juncture that Sir Guy reined-in his horse and looked round. He turned away quickly, and spoke to his companion with a slight smile.

‘Perhaps we had better not go back that way, Miss Saltoun.’

‘You don’t know how you minister to my self-importance, Sir Guy,’ returned the young lady. ‘I *was* Miss Saltoun once, before my cousin came to us. I have fallen, you see. I am simply Miss Charlotte, a person of no consequence at all. Why are we not to go back that way?’

‘Well, I thought perhaps we might be *de trop*.’

Charlotte gave him a puzzled glance, and then laughed.

‘O dear, no; we never think of Freddy in that way. We were children together, you know. He is like a brother; only brothers won’t always be made useful; besides, poor Fred has a weakness.’

‘A weakness!’

‘Yes, it is the best term I can think of; the others are all commonplace. But you, his friend, and not know that!’ added Charlotte, raising her eyebrows. ‘Shall we join them now, Sir Guy?’

A strange sort of light came over Sir Guy’s face, like a reflection from the golden gleams on those distant hills.

‘Yes,’ he said, ‘let us go back. Poor old David! So he has a weakness!’

‘Stop, Sir Guy; I had no business to let it out. I thought, of course, that what David knew, Jonathan must know. You will promise not to tease him or betray me.’

‘I promise—anything.’

‘Anything?’ said Charlotte, quickly. ‘Then you will come to the ball at the assembly-rooms?’

‘Of course I will.’

‘Freddy said you hated balls, and he knew that you would not punish yourself.’

‘Freddy was right,’ said the baronet gravely. ‘I would not punish myself willingly; and in a general way I am not fond of balls, but—’

‘It is different at the seaside, is it not? One is apt to get dull; but really we do pretty well here.’

And then they rode on; and somehow it fell to Sir Guy’s lot to be near Alice when she dismounted in the little shrubbery of the ‘house in its own grounds.’ Freddy Bent saw Sir Guy stoop slightly to say something as she gathered up the folds of her riding-dress; but her head was turned away, and he only knew by that strange gleam of light which passed again over Sir Guy’s face that she had answered him at all. Freddy gave a little groan, and washed his hands of them all.

‘You told us a fib, Freddy,’ said Charlotte, looking after the baronet. ‘Jonathan is the most fascinating man I ever saw, and he is coming to the ball.’

‘Two of them!’ murmured Freddy, lifting up his hands. ‘What is there about this man that draws everybody towards him? And if they only knew what I know, what would they think of him then!’

CHAPTER III. ‘WAS IT QUITE PRUDENT?’

MRS. SALTOUN put the question to herself first, and then to her husband. She could not always go out with Charlotte and Alice; it was impossible. They would wear her out. And Mr. Saltoun shrugged his shoulders, and said,

Let them alone, they’re old enough to take care of themselves. As for Charisford, he’s one of the most sensible men I ever met; and surely you’re satisfied to trust them with Freddy Bent.’

And then Mrs. Saltoun gave up the point, and thought a little bit about the days when she was young, and should have enjoyed the rambles on these sunny days as much as any of them.

‘Well, I have had my summer,’ she said, with a little sigh. ‘It’s very short to look back upon, and I’m a sober old woman, and know that there never was a day in it as bright in possession as fancy and anticipation had pictured it beforehand. They have

got all this to find out—those light-hearted young people who think life is made of roses.’

Perhaps they had ; but if so, it did not seem to trouble them much. To Freddy Bent, who had known Sir Guy so long, the change in him was wonderful. All his affectation of indolent carelessness was gone, and he could perform feats of rowing and scaling dangerous crags for wild flowers, which his friend would never have conceived possible. And then poor David had blundered, and was aware of it. If Alice had been totally indifferent to Sir Guy before, she would have thought of him after those broken mysterious hints of Freddy’s. A young girl is always sorry for a man who has had some disappointment or grief to bear ; and she could not or would not draw any other inference than this from Freddy’s words. She was a little indignant at them too. It was hardly her idea of a true friendship, that one of these two should throw out hints concerning the other ; and Freddy’s hesitating, ‘ Carisford is a good fellow, but—’ recurred to her constantly as pitiful and unworthy of him.

They were to meet at the assembly-rooms, she knew, for this had been the purport of Sir Guy’s speech when she stood in the drive gathering up her riding-dress. Alice was hardly conscious herself of the subtle element which had begun to steal into her thoughts about this man. If you had asked her what she thought of him, she could not have told. She would have said, perhaps, that he interested her because he was unlike other men, because his talk was not frivolous, but had often in it a power and beauty which made her grave by its very fascination. She never said those small nothings to him which formed great part of her conversation with other gentlemen. She never parried his occasional appeals to her with a smart rejoinder or a sarcasm ; and she had not examined herself sufficiently to find out why this seaside holiday had a certain source of interest which other holidays had wanted. Freddy’s innuendoes might have passed unnoticed perhaps, but that Alice was getting used to such warnings, and understood too well what they generally meant. She had been obliged already to answer some half-dozen aspirants for her hand—*i. e.* her fortune ; but then these things were so patent that they gave her no pain. This was another affair altogether.

As she leaned out of the window of her own room, thinking about it, watching the chalky glitter of the white houses in the sun, Sir Guy’s face came before her. There was truth and nobleness in it, she thought. How was it possible to suffer any mean ungenerous suspicions to take possession of her mind ? Besides

—and at this ‘besides’ a slight smile stole to her lips, and a colour, which was not the reflection of any sunbeam, came into her face. It was of no use to say ‘besides,’ for Sir Guy’s manner had been such as no woman could mistake. She should see him again at the ball. It is to be feared that this was principally the substance into which poor Freddy’s well-meant hints resolved themselves.

‘Lady Downham is jealous of you, Alice,’ said Charlotte Saltoun, as she stood arranging her dress before the glass. ‘She told Colonel Brand that you rouged, and asked him to introduce Sir Guy. By the way, I can’t conceive why you persisted in putting on that white thing again. Lady Downham will recognise it. You, who might have a dress for every day in the year if you liked.’

‘I wear this dress because white suits me,’ responded Alice; ‘and what is the use of getting a new one when this is just as good as new?’

Charlotte made a little grimace of dissent.

‘Upon my word I think the fates have made a mistake this time; you don’t know how to spend your money in the least.’

‘No, Charlotte, I don’t think I do. I’m not at all sure that it’s a happy thing to be an heiress.’

‘Some ladies wouldn’t object to try,’ said Charlotte drily. ‘Why isn’t it happy?’

‘I said I wasn’t sure about it. People seem to think it ought to make one suspicious, a thing that I hate. I wish you wouldn’t talk so much about it.’

‘Who has made you suspicious now, Alice; Sir Guy?’

Charlotte was occupied with her dress, and did not see the sudden colour that rose over her cousin’s face at the name.

‘What is Sir Guy to me?’ said Alice shortly; ‘or to you either, Charlotte, that you are always bringing him forward? He is—’

‘Ready, children?’ broke in Mrs. Saltoun, rousing herself. ‘We are very late.’

‘Coming, mamma, in one moment.—Well, Alice, finish if you please. What is Sir Guy?’

But Alice had lost her vivid colour, and answered with cool indifference,

‘I don’t know; a disappointed man, perhaps. It is nothing to us.’

‘Well, I wouldn’t be sure of that. The hypothesis explains

a look of "patient sadness," which I have seen on his face, certainly, but—Yes, mamma, we are quite ready.'

CHAPTER IV. A LITTLE TABLEAU VIVANT.

THE tide was rising ; it crept on over the sand, and rustled amongst the pebbles on the beach ; higher still, and it lapped against the rocks under a smart green balcony, into which the windows of the ball-room opened. Then the moon got up and turned her light upon two people who had come out of the hot crowded ball-room into the balcony. These were Sir Guy Carisford and Miss Saltoun. Alice wore a white cloak, fastened at the throat with a clasp that glittered and flashed in the moonlight. The flowers in her hair were white, and her bouquet was white. Within the ball-room the musicians were playing a 'spirit valse,' and Sir Guy smiled as he reared his tall form against the wall, and looked down upon her. He would have said that there was no romance in his temperament only a fortnight ago, and now he began to wonder what kept him silent, as though by force, in the presence of this young girl, whom he had openly avowed his determination to marry. A pang passed through Sir Guy's heart at the thought, he did not know why. He did not like to remember that speech of his to Freddy. Alone here in the great silent night, under the stars, with the restless sea rustling and sweeping quietly over the pebbles and the rocks beneath ; something not in the scene or the hour, though these helped, had roused Sir Guy to a strange consciousness of wrong and hardness in his past life, and of something infinitely better and greater than he had ever dreamed of, which might come into his future to glorify it. Do him justice. He forgot at this moment all his plans, all the counsels which had been impressed upon him from his boyhood. He looked down upon that shadowy figure all in white, with the moonbeams falling about her like a pale halo, and did not remember that she was an heiress.

Sir Guy changed his position, leaning forward, with one knee on the balcony and one arm over it, pointing to a distant light.

'Many a good ship has gone down there,' he said quietly. 'Many a cry of strong despair risen up from mother and father, husband and wife. Did you ever see a wreck ? I suppose not.'

A sight to haunt one for life. This great strong turbulent sea has much to answer for; and yet how quiet and smiling it is now! Do you know what a long sea-voyage is like, Miss Saltoun?

'No; at least not from experience. But I should like to know. I have never lost sight of land.'

Sir Guy turned towards her quickly. Was he going to tell her then that it would be the crowning triumph of his life to bear her away over those waters, and witness her pleasure in the wonderful sights, which were old indeed to him, but which would be fresh and glorious again with her at his side? Some such thoughts passed through his mind, but they went no further. As Alice spoke, a sudden glare of light from the ball-room fell on them; and Freddy Bent, stepping out with his partner, saw the little picture too late to retreat.

'Never lost sight of land!' repeated Freddy, conscious of a little awkwardness, and trying to cover it. 'Don't tell him so, if you like peace. He has seen everything that is to be seen, from clouds of flying fish to the saddest sight one can look at—a dead companion digging his own grave with a single stroke on the water. He has been everywhere, I do believe, and done everything. Why looks he so? With his crossbow he shot an albatross, measuring—who knows what?'

'I wish he had brought it home,' said Charlotte Saltoun. 'I am curious to see one.'

'Or if you want inland scenery,' pursued Freddy, 'he can take you up the dangerous but mighty Hooghley; he will stretch out before you vast masses of cocoa-nut trees, dates, bananas, and show you buffaloes grazing under them. Natives will come under his hand from Indian villages, and gesticulate, and clatter their silver rings for you; or he will take you to Barrackpore and show you the scene of the mess-room tragedy, and thence into the jungle, where you will hear the most unearthly sounds that mortal ear can listen to. Will that do?'

'Freddy Bent is going to give a lecture at the Mechanics' Hall,' said Charlotte, 'and he is rehearsing. Alice, do you remember what I told you about Lady Downham? Well, I have just heard her talking about you. Did any one ever hear such a voice as that woman has, I wonder? And then her odious yellow face, and her red hair with a parrot-tulip stuck in it! But every one knows what her husband married her for.'

A little indescribable sensation of fear checked the smile on Miss Saltoun's lips as her cousin finished this speech.

‘What was it, Charlotte?’

‘Her money, to be sure. Do you suppose a man like that would have married such a vulgar old creature for anything else? And he never goes out anywhere with her. But the money doesn’t do him much good, people say, for she leads him an awful life at home.’

‘So he ought to have an awful life,’ said Alice in a low tone. ‘It’s a sin one could never forget; it rouses one’s utmost detestation.’

‘What does, Alice?’

‘Marrying from base motives. I hope people who do that are always punished.’

Charlotte laughed.

‘Suppose you were hard up, as gentlemen call it, pinched and in debt—’

‘I would beg first, Charlotte, or starve.’

‘Starvation is a nice pleasant thing, easy to talk about.’

‘Starvation before dishonour,’ said Alice abruptly.

Freddy Bent had the grace to turn his head away. No one looked at Sir Guy: no one saw how the light and kindly warmth and greatness—for there was greatness in him—faded out of his face, and left it white and cold; a rigid face, staring out into the far distance. If he had forgotten for a few brief moments, he could forget no longer. He who, a few minutes ago, had looked out into the starlight with his heart full of tender thought, stood convicted of this sin which could never be forgotten. He had put before himself money as the first, indeed the only desirable object in marriage. The wife he would be obliged to take, of course, as a troublesome appendage, with her money; and he should have to bear with her as best he could. No voice could have been harsher with him just now than his own, no contempt more supreme than that which he poured upon himself. If they would only go away, all of them, and leave him! If some one would at least break this terrible silence which had fallen upon them all!

‘You have put a spell upon us, Alice,’ said Charlotte Saltoun at last, with a shiver. ‘You do get so terribly in earnest. But I don’t think we are any of us doing right,’ she added; ‘and I am quite sure that you are not. Besides, it is time to go home; mamma is looking very jaded, and I think I am a bit tired too. Will you come in, Freddy?’

They went away, and Alice got up to follow. Then Sir Guy started from the half-kneeling position which he had been too

proud to change when Freddy came out and discovered the tableau.

‘Must you go?’

His voice sounded very strange to Alice; to himself it was like a funeral bell. He was bidding her good-bye in his own heart, and the knowledge only drew him infinitely nearer to her. To think that he might have won her for his own, and yet that he dared not try!

‘Yes,’ said Alice. ‘It is getting late. Good-night, Sir Guy.’

But he only stood looking down upon her, white and irresolute, as though he hardly dared to touch the hand she held out to him.

‘Good-night,’ repeated Alice.

‘Good-bye,’ responded the baronet. ‘I hope that you may be as happy as you deserve to be always.’

When she was gone Sir Guy stooped down as if searching for something. The light from the ball-room still fell upon him, but he did not notice it. He had seen, a little time ago, a single white blossom fall from her bouquet upon the balcony, and now he picked this up and put it to his lips. He could not know that Alice saw the movement, but she did; and then the light was shut out, and he was alone. I don’t think Sir Guy saw anything of the stars, or the moonlight, or the vast sheet of water sleeping under them, as he stood there, staring seawards. Alice was before him, everywhere. He saw the white flowers and the glittering clasp of her cloak; he saw the light falling upon her softly, and knew how beautiful she was, and how he loved her. This he had never known fully until to-night. And then he saw her face turn to him, and change into the face of an accusing angel.

The ball-room emptied of its guests, but still Sir Guy stood motionless where Alice had left him. He thought that if she had been there still, he, in his desperation, would have told her all, and thrown himself upon her mercy; but it is probable that he miscalculated his courage. His thoughts came and went with a strange desultory indistinctness; thoughts of those days when he wandered to and fro on the earth, and saw its wonders; before this great passion and remorse had come near to wither his energies. Could he go back to his old life? And if he did, would it be possible to forget, and be as he was before? Many faces which he had known rose up before him out of foreign lands, as he listened to the retreating tide; many recollections

of wild adventure and daring indifference to peril; but they never hid for a moment the desperate shame and self-disgust which had come upon him to-night. He was a fallen man. He thought of his friend, and humbled himself. David, whose simplicity he had smiled at, was a wiser and better man than himself, after all. He remembered every word of the conversation which had so nearly terminated in a quarrel between them. As if he were not already sufficiently tortured, he repeated it again mentally; and when he came to this, 'Simply that I came down here to marry Miss Saltoun,' Sir Guy covered his face, into which the shame had risen burning red. He would never see her again.

The tide sank away from the rocks and back over the sand into the distance. Sir Guy leaned over the balcony, held his pilfered flower for a moment suspended, and let it drop on the rock below. Then he passed into the empty ball-room, through the few lounging figures that still surrounded the doors, and went home.

CHAPTER V. SIR GUY TAKES DOWN THE ADVERTISEMENT.

'SIR GUY CARISFORD!'

Sir Guy sat at a writing-table with a pen in his hand, and he was revising a somewhat lengthy-looking epistle. He took the note from the salver which the waiter presented to him, and put it aside.

'Wait a moment,' said Sir Guy. He finished his revision, folded, sealed, and addressed his letter.

'Let that be taken at once,' said Sir Guy, looking at the man. 'Let a messenger go with it now. You understand?'

'Certainly, Sir Guy.'

Then the baronet opened the envelope which he had put on one side. How was he to be sure that he could keep his resolution if he did not place it beyond breaking?

'I know what that is,' said Freddy Bent from the opposite side of the room. 'I've had one. You will go, of course?'

Sir Guy did not look up, but he bit his lips, and if Freddy had been near enough, he would have seen that the hand which returned the missive to its envelope shook a little.

'I am afraid not,' replied Sir Guy. 'I leave here for town by the mail this evening.'

‘Town!’ ejaculated Freddy. ‘Leave here! You can’t be serious.’

‘Very serious indeed, Freddy.’

Freddy hesitated a moment, and then went up to Sir Guy’s table.

‘Old fellow, something has happened. Can I do anything, or go anywhere for you?’

‘No, David.’

Sir Guy’s tone was gentler than usual, and Freddy lingered. Sir Guy confident and self-assured was one person; Sir Guy in some unknown difficulty another.

‘If I could, you know why you have a right to my services, Guy.’

Then the baronet put down his pen and looked straight into Freddy’s face.

‘David, I have been a fool. I am punished.’

Freddy’s first thought was that Alice had refused him, and, with a curious inconsistency, he felt both sorry for Guy and angry with her. But Sir Guy read this, and shook his head with a faint smile.

‘No, David, it isn’t that. I cannot have the baseness to ask her or see her again. I’ve learnt my lesson a bit later in life than you, that’s all.’

‘You would actually marry Alice Saltoun because you love her?’ asked Freddy.

Sir Guy nodded.

‘If I married her at all, which I never shall do. Hush, David, it’s too late! By this time, if my orders were obeyed, she is reading my letter—the hardest work I ever accomplished; only a bare statement of facts.’

‘Carisford—’

‘Don’t,’ interrupted Sir Guy. ‘Old fellow, you remember the advertisement that I told you was written on my forehead? Well, it’s taken down. My estates will never be cleared in *that* way. Now go away, David; I’ve more letters to write.’

Sir Guy wrote his letters, and went out. He went first to the rocks under the balcony of the assembly-rooms, and stood there, thinking. As the tide had crept up last night, so it came on now, and swept across the rocks with a quiet remonstrance as he turned away. From there he passed on upwards, and sat on a ledge overhanging a little bay in which they had wandered together searching for seaweed. There was no weed

to be seen now ; deep water covered it all, even as deep water hid the pleasant days it spoke of. I think if a judge had been appointed to mete out Sir Guy's punishment, nothing harder could have been found than this letter which he had just written. The story looked so hateful in his own eyes as he wrote it ; the hero of it so mean and base. He had not spared himself a single detail, and he never asked for any hope or any answer. In that, perhaps, he was wrong, since it would be impossible for Alice to answer a letter in which no question was asked. But as Sir Guy had gone to an extreme in his previous notions concerning marriage, so he went straight to the opposite extreme now. There was one more place which he meant to visit in his spirit of self-torment. This was a sort of natural terrace up amongst the hills, where they had held a sort of pic-nic, and had been supremely happy under the usual pic-nic discomforts. He could not go round by the ordinary path to this place, but made one for himself, springing from crag to crag like a wild huntsman.

Well, the sun shone on the hills just as brightly as ever, only the music of voices and light laughter was not heard on the terrace. He sat down and called the scene back again. He looked away along the purple moorland and the line of blue hills in the distance. A haze of sunlight over all—over the quivering leaves of the low trees ; the grass, burnt brown in patches, and the wealth of wild flowers scattered about amongst the crags.

He remembered that Alice had wished for one of those bits of heath growing high up in a fissure above his reach, and that he had climbed the rock to get it for her. He remembered Freddy's indolent raillery, and how little he had minded it ; and then he thought of Alice with a great pang, and wondered what she thought of him. 'If she cared for me ever so little then, she doesn't now. And yet I swear that if she were penniless, I would choose her before the whole world.'

Sir Guy was destined to be tried a little harder still. At this moment he sat alone on the terrace, kicking the loose stones about moodily, and wondering at the indefatigable tourists on the rocks above him, in the blazing sun ; at the next, Charlotte Saltoun and her cousin turned the corner of the rock, and stood suddenly before him.

Sir Guy's face grew white, as it had done last night on the balcony. When Charlotte Saltoun accosted him lightly, and told him that she had heard from Freddy of his shameful conduct,

an insane suspicion flashed across him that Freddy had made everything public, and he did not dare to speak.

‘But are you really going, Sir Guy? We made sure of you for Thursday.’

‘You are very good,’ responded the baronet. ‘I’m afraid it will be impossible for me to stay.’

‘Well, perhaps you will come back again,’ said Charlotte, moving on. ‘At any rate, we shall see you before you go.’

Alice never said a word, never looked at him; so he knew that she had read his letter. This was just the one drop too much in Sir Guy’s cup. He could have borne to go away without an answer to his letter; indeed, he had told himself that he did not even hope for one; but now that Alice was there before his eyes, he could not go without speaking to her. Sir Guy had rarely in all his life acted from any sudden impulse, but he did so now. He started forward and stood beside her, looking down.

‘May I say one word to you, Miss Saltoun? I have no right to ask it, but—’

And then he paused. Charlotte just looked at them, turned away, and went on down the hill. She knew nothing about Sir Guy’s reasons for going away in such hot haste; she did not even know that he had written to her cousin; but she did know that no one wanted her up there on the terrace.

‘I told mamma how it would be last night,’ said Charlotte; ‘and now there’s an end to all fun. When two people get engaged, there’s never any good to be done with them.’

And then she turned the corner of the rock, and was out of sight of the terrace.

‘I cannot part with you in this way,’ said Sir Guy. ‘I meant to go away without seeing you again. I never would have sought you out; but now that you are here, I cannot let you pass away for ever, and stand by silent. Say at least that you forgive me.’

‘If there is aught to forgive, Sir Guy—yes.’

‘And believe, if you can, that my love for you is sincere, and that I am punished as I deserved to be. If—if you were poor instead of rich, it would be the dearest hope of my heart to win you for my wife. Is this too hard for you to believe?’

‘Sir Guy,’ said Alice, ‘if you had asked me to be your wife, without telling me all this; if afterwards I had heard it, even from your own lips, you would have darkened my whole life; as it is—’

Sir Guy turned round with a sudden hope lighting up his face.

‘As it is?’ he repeated.

As it was, Sir Guy did not get punished as the sternest moralist would have had him punished; for he won his wife. Perhaps the very frankness of his confession, and the chivalry with which he gave up all right to be heard, were powerful agents in his favour—anyhow, he won his wife. What they found to talk about up on the hill for the next hour or two, and what the indefatigable tourists thought of them, must remain amongst the unsolved mysteries of life. When the baronet got back to his hotel, the tide was a good way out, and Freddy Bent began to warn him that he would miss the train. Sir Guy looked at him in the utmost astonishment, and then he put his hand on Freddy’s shoulder with a smile.

‘I had forgotten all about it. Never mind the train. Old David,’ said Sir Guy gravely, ‘I am not going to town. You and I are going to the Saltouns this evening, and every evening until further notice. There are people in the world more merciful than you, and I am going to marry Alice Saltoun.’

A LIFE AND A MEMORY.

PART I.

Two boys were leaning over the low wall of a rustic bridge, engaged in earnest conversation. It was a picturesque spot, and the gray stone parapet covered with ivy, the old oak-tree whose branches overhung the narrow though rapid stream which ran below, the mill-wheel from which the water fell, tinted by the setting sun of a summer's evening like a succession of rainbows, might have elicited admiration from more observant spectators than the two boys to whom my story belongs; but, as the fact was, river, mill-wheel, and evening light were all unnoticed, though their eyes were fixed upon the brawling, dancing stream, as they occasionally stooped down to pick up pebbles, and watched them fall into the water below.

Something was evidently engrossing their minds, and was the subject of that eager talk. They were a striking contrast; one slight, dark, and wiry; the other of a larger, heavier build, with fair complexion, and a countenance that betokened either extreme indolence or weakness, perhaps both. This boy, whose name was Newstead, appeared to be remonstrating with the other upon some scheme he was eagerly advocating.

‘It’s no good, Erle; I am sure you would never get it done: who is there to help you?’

‘Who?’ returned the other indignantly; ‘why, heaps of fellows. You don’t suppose the whole school is going to take all this as you take it! I believe you’d let a stage-coach run over you if you were lying down in the sun, sooner than move six inches out of the way.’

‘I don’t know quite that; but few things are worth much trouble; and as to this plan of yours, of shutting the masters

out of the school, even if you can do it, Dr. Hariton is not a man to alter his mind for bullying.'

'He'll have to alter it for something,' said Erle. 'Does he suppose we have been here all these years under Baldwin, and now he is to come with his stiff, priggish manner, and keep us all under lock and key like a set of babies? He is a confounded tyrant, that's what he is, and the sooner he is taught that we won't stand it the better.'

'Well, what is it you want me to do in the matter?'

'Why, nothing; only as senior in the long room, you must shut your eyes and ears as soon as the sun rises to-morrow: my job won't take more than two hours; and it's light before four now. It's easy to get out by walking along the top of the wall. The getting back is not so easy, but we can manage it, I dare say.'

'But what have you done about North and Thompson? One's a saint, and the other would peach.'

'Done! why, nothing, to be sure. I'm not so soft as to let those fellows know what we're after. Why, North lives at Hariton's!'

'And what good do you expect from this?'

'Why, they will be surprised, if they're nothing else, when they find they can't get inside the gates, and that may make old Hariton think twice what he's about before he tries to bully fellows who won't bear it; and as to you, why, you've simply got to do nothing at all. I don't see why you should concern yourself about it.'

'Perhaps not; only I do know about it, you see,' said Newstead.

'And who's to know that? It will never come out who started the scheme, and so it's "punish one punish all," and I don't think he'll do that.'

'Well, we shall see what comes of it; but I don't expect much good, I confess.'

The two boys sauntered back into the school, and were soon in bed. Newstead fell into the heavy, dreamless sleep belonging to his somewhat lethargic nature; while Erle's slumbers were constantly broken by the anticipation of his morning's scheme, anxiety for the result, and fear lest the early dawn should not find him at work.

Dr. Hariton had only succeeded to the head-mastership of the school at Bridge End about six months before, and had come in for rather an undue share of unpopularity; for, though he was

a stiff and narrow-minded man, enforcing rules that were simply harassing to the boys, without their bringing any particularly good results, it was the contrast of his system of espionage with the trust reposed in them by their former master, Dr. Baldwin, that at once condemned him to hatred and opposition. There was no elasticity in his manner of ruling. Boys and masters all felt the change keenly ; and the real love they had felt for Dr. Baldwin seemed to urge them on, from a false feeling of loyalty, to oppose his successor.

Julian Erle was one of the first to show a spirit of insubordination, and, as one of the head boys in the school, his example was followed by many others. The constant grumbling soon grew into a determination to show, by some very decided act, the feeling that existed among them ; and, after many plans discussed and rejected, it was agreed to shut the masters out of the school by fastening up the great iron gates in a manner that must take some time to undo.

To accomplish this the boys had collected a quantity of long pliable rods, with which they proposed to interlace the heavy iron bars from the top to the bottom, and to cover them with as much furze, gorse, and prickly holly as could be collected for the purpose ; so that demolishing their work should at all events be a painful process. They had been continually on the banks of the river, to cut as many willow wands as possible. These were concealed in different parts of the grounds, and a man had been employed to bring a cart-load of gorse and furze from a neighbouring common. All this had been done ; and the great thing now was to use their weapons before they were discovered.

Accordingly, before four o'clock between thirty and forty boys were up and stirring. It was, as Erle had said, an easy matter to get out of the dormitory window, and, by creeping along the wall that bounded the outer court, to let themselves down outside the great gates.

Eagerly, skilfully, and silently did the little band of rebels proceed with their work ; and in less than two hours the gates were so formidably barricaded, that they felt they had put an impregnable barrier between themselves and their tyrant ; and every boy crept back to his bed, his heart beating with exultation and triumph.

Matters went on as usual till half-past seven o'clock, when Dr. Hariton and the other masters were to come into the school. Very pale was the doctor's face, very dark his brow, as with stern and compressed lips he stood before the formidable-looking barri-

cares. The countenances of the rest were divided between dismay and amusement. There was another way into the school; but of course Dr. Hariton could not compromise his dignity so far as to use it, even had time allowed of his doing so, for it was some distance round. Rushing quickly down the hill, and up from the street, came the boys from their respective houses, as if they were afraid of being late for school; and there, in front of the iron gates, which had been so successfully barricaded, both boys and men were brought to bay. The boys were silent, the master angry. He ordered them to open the gates immediately, and assist the 'Custos,' who was making some futile attempts on the other side to remove the barrier. But not a boy moved; and the old 'Custos' could not succeed in making any break in the fences. He pricked his fingers, muttered and grumbled, and soon gave up the attempt. Still more exasperated, Dr. Hariton called for the head-boy of the school; but he was not forthcoming. He walked angrily away, desiring that Francis Newstead should be sent to him at once, and gave notice that he should require the attendance of the sixth form in his study at a quarter before ten.

The uproar was great. At that early hour only masters and boys were about; and no sooner had Dr. Hariton beat his retreat, than long shouts of triumph and yells of defiance followed him to his home. Till that moment he had never realised his unpopularity; and it was with a strong feeling of anger and disappointment that he reëntered his study, and restlessly pacing up and down the room, began to consider what would be the best course to pursue. The opposition was evidently too formidable and unanimous for him to be able to treat it lightly: the ringleaders must be punished and expelled; but he was too well acquainted with the code of schoolboy honour not to be aware of the difficulty that he would have in discovering them.

While deep in thought, a knock at the door announced Francis Newstead's arrival, and the doctor sat down in his arm-chair to receive him.

'Well, sir,' he said, after a moment's silence on both sides, 'what have you to say to me?'

'Nothing, sir,' said Newstead, looking up in surprise.

'Nothing? No explanation to give of this disgraceful, this abominable, this insulting behaviour?' exclaimed Dr. Hariton, waxing more wrath as he recalled the scene of the morning. 'Then I say, as head-boy in the school, you should have something to say; some explanation to give of your conduct.'

‘But I have done nothing, sir.’

‘Don’t tell me, sir,’ persisted Dr. Hariton, more and more angry; ‘if you did not do it, you knew it was being done. Do not add lying and cowardice to your bad conduct.’

The colour rushed into Francis Newstead’s face, and his eyes flashed with indignation as he answered passionately,

‘If I had done it, sir, I should neither deny it, nor be afraid that any one should know that I had.’

And as Dr. Hariton looked upon his clear blue eyes and noble open countenance, he felt it impossible to doubt his word; but the evident difficulty of discovering the truth only exasperated him more; and he continued, without noticing the boy’s indignant denial,

‘It’s perfectly clear that this could not have been done without your knowledge; so I insist on being told the truth about it at once.’

Easy and good-tempered as Francis Newstead was, he was now so thoroughly provoked that he lost all self-control, and answered, in a proud defiant tone,

‘Then the truth is, that I said all I could to Erle to prevent it, and did not succeed.’

‘It was Erle, then, who was the originator of the scheme?’ exclaimed the Doctor, catching at the name.

‘I did not say so,’ replied Newstead, biting his lips with vexation at his unguarded speech; ‘I only said I spoke to him about it.’

‘Very well, sir,’ returned the Doctor, more than satisfied with the clue obtained by Newstead’s unwary speech. ‘You may go now; and return here with the rest of the sixth form at a quarter before ten o’clock.’

Very much annoyed and crest-fallen, Francis Newstead retired, knowing in what light he would be looked upon by the whole school, if it was believed that he had betrayed any one to the head-master; and indeed, to a generous-hearted boy like Newstead, the very idea of having done it, however inadvertently, was galling in the extreme. He went at once in search of Erle, to tell him what had happened; but unfortunately he could not find him, and they only met just as the sixth form were going into the study before ten o’clock, the gates having been previously opened by the assistance of some workmen, the boys declaring one and all that they could not do it.

The Doctor received them very sternly, and after a short angry speech, which was listened to in sullen silence, he pro-

ceeded to inquire who had originated this act of rebellion. No one answered, and the Doctor continued :

‘ I know of one of the instigators of this disgraceful conduct ; but I shall reserve his sentence till to-day at four o’clock, when I expect the whole school to be assembled, and to inform me of the name of every boy concerned in this shameful act of rebellion. In the mean time there will be no half-holiday, and every boy must write a hundred lines of the first *Æneid* for me before to-morrow.’

Very discontentedly the boys retired, and there was much grumbling in the school at a sentence which those who were not implicated considered extremely unjust ; but none were either so perplexed and unhappy as Newstead ; for, knowing the violence of his friend’s temper, he thought that by telling him what had occurred he should take away the small chance there was of his passing muster with the rest, and yet he could not bear to be acting what would seem a dishonourable part by him.

There was but little time out of school that day ; but in the evening Newstead came up to Erle, who was hurrying past him, and stopped him, saying,

‘ Wait a minute, Erle ; I want to go with you.’

‘ I can’t wait ; that confounded imposition has put me back with my other work, and I’m going to get some one to finish it for me.’

‘ I can do that ; but I must speak to you—’

But Erle ran off in such a hurry that Newstead’s imploring accents were lost in air. In vain he searched for Erle ; the Fates were against their meeting ; and when the school assembled at four o’clock, in accordance with Dr. Hariton’s order, Erle was the very last to rush in, heedless of every one, in his usual impatient manner.

Dr. Hariton’s anger had toned down. His manner was stern, but there was a sadness in his voice as he addressed the boys. He again reminded the sixth form that it was to them that he looked for support in the school, from them that he expected the example which would guide and control the rest. He had not imagined that the results of Dr. Baldwin’s teaching could have so soon passed away. He inquired of them in what respect he had given them offence, for he concluded such an outbreak could only be the expression of some pent-up dissatisfaction. His manner had a tenderness about it which took the boys by surprise, and made many of them feel that perhaps, after all, they had misunderstood him. He asked them to tell him what their grievance was, that if reasonable it might be redressed ;

but he went on to say that before any step was taken by him he must be met by a candid avowal on the part of the ringleaders of the rebellion.

To this there was no reply—not a boy spoke ; there was no indication of capitulation on their side, and he felt that he had made a wrong move. Somewhat irritated by this, and meeting with no response, but perceiving, on the contrary, the most dogged determination to be silent expressed in the countenances of the boys, he at once made use of the information so unintentionally supplied by Newstead, and said that ‘he knew the name of one of the ringleaders, and that as there was such a resolute determination on their part not to make any confession, he had no alternative but at once, there and then, publicly to expel the boy to whom he referred.’

‘Julian Erle, stand forward, that I may publicly expel you from Bridge End for your act of rebellion ; I know you to be one of the ringleaders. I know it from one to whose wiser counsels you refused to listen. Leave my presence ; and mind that within the next three hours you leave Bridge End. Whatever you may leave behind you shall be forwarded to you ; but your face must not be seen here beyond the time I have named.’

Great was the consternation of the whole school, greater still that of poor Erle. He grew scarlet, and then deadly pale ; and as he passed Newstead, who was standing near the door, he said to him, ‘Newstead, you d—d sneak, I have to thank you for this ; but I’ll have my revenge before I die, so beware !’

These were the last words that Newstead heard Julian Erle utter, for no one could prevail on him to see Newstead, who waited for some time in hopes of taking leave of him, and of giving him the only explanation in his power. Julian Erle, a popular, high-spirited boy, who would himself rather have died than betray a companion, left the school amidst the openly-expressed regrets of his schoolfellows, and a heart bursting with bitter hatred and desire for revenge.

And now we must pass over an interval of five-and-twenty years, and see the two boys we have been describing as middle-aged men, one bronzed and looking older than his age from exposure to the heat of a tropical sun, for Francis Newstead had spent many years in India, where he had had a good appointment. He still retained many of his boyish characteristics, and his fine open countenance and bright smile had brought him many friends. Genial, generous, and kind-hearted, he was a

universal favourite, and was now returning to England to live on the result of his labours. Julian Erle was comparatively a wreck, almost a cripple from rheumatic gout, and a confirmed invalid. When he returned home after his expulsion from Bridge End, his father, who was a violent-tempered man, was so furiously angry that he insisted on his leaving home again immediately to study for the bar, and sent him to London for that purpose. For two years he scarcely ever saw him ; when his own sudden and serious illness necessitated Julian's recall, but it was only in time to receive his father's forgiveness and blessing. Mr. Erle had a small property in Sussex, to which, as the eldest son, Julian succeeded. A short time after he married his cousin, and with her he had lived quietly at Luscombe Hill ever since, becoming every year more gouty and more infirm.

But we must leave my two heroes for a time, and turn to a very different and far gayer scene.

A group of young people assembled in the bay-window of a drawing-room in one of the largest houses in Hastings.

It was a sunny and bright morning at the end of March, without much wind, and a blue unclouded sky. The window was open ; some were sitting on the ledge, others looking out. In the farther drawing-room, of which the folding-doors were open, were the remains of breakfast.

The house belonged to Sir Henry Westmacott, and the group in the window consisted of his daughters and two sons, a son and daughter of his youngest brother, and a college friend of his sons'. A happy, merry party, with no other thought than to compress as much amusement into the day as possible. Sir Henry, for whose health the family had removed to Hastings, and who was sitting by the fire reading, complained bitterly of the cold wind that came in at the open window.

'We will shut it, papa, in one minute,' said Maria Westmacott, 'when Rachel and Lewis can settle what they are going to do.'

'Rachel had better stay at home and be quiet,' said her uncle petulantly ; 'there is always something extraordinary to be done for her.'

It was evident that Rachel Westmacott was the moving spirit of the party, or, at all events, that all combined to do as she wished. She was rather a delicate-looking girl, with a pale clear complexion, and dark hair and eyes, very like her brother, whom she was evidently entreating to do something against his better judgment.

'O, you bad uncle !' said Rachel, running up to him and

kissing his forehead; 'why do you say what is not true? Why, it's you that say I am to do what I like always.'

'Bless you!' said the old man, kissing her fondly; 'but it is true you are a plague, nevertheless.'

'It's the others that are plagues,' she returned. 'My plans are all settled. Horace, do shut the window, and if you and Lewis will go down to the beach to speak to the old man about his boat, we will come down to you.'

'The tide won't serve till twelve, I can tell you,' said Horace, a tall, broad-shouldered, fair youth, with somewhat heavy features, but a beautiful smile that lighted them up when he spoke; 'and all the sailors on the beach, and the fishermen too, say that this boat you are so fond of is not seaworthy.'

'Stuff!' retorted Rachel; 'it's only because they suppose that, if they say that, you will use theirs; and besides, I believe you want us to have a large boat, that you may go too. Now, I'm going to be happy, and have a long day with Lewis all to myself.'

'You never want me now, Rachel; why is that?' said Horace, looking very discontented.

'I don't so much mind about you, but I don't want Arthur Faulkenor,' was the not very gracious rejoinder; 'and you can ride with him. Besides, you are always taking Lewis away from me.'

'Now, Rachel,' said Maria Westmacott from the next room, 'if you have done giving your orders to the whole world, perhaps you will tell me what to practise for the evening. You know the Thatchers are coming.'

'You need not practise at all; you can play anything. Maria, do let Rose Thatcher play those duets with you to-night, and I'll practise them to-morrow.'

'Certainly not: you will play them better than she will, even at sight. I wonder what I am going to do to-day?'

'Come with us,' said Rachel, with a great effort, in a sudden fit of generosity.

'No, I can't leave papa; and, besides, you are going to be drowned, you know.'

'Many a true word spoken in jest,' said Rachel, laughing, and kissing her. 'Now here is Lewis, looking furious that I am not ready. I sha'n't be half a minute;' and she ran upstairs without waiting for her brother's reproaches.

'I suppose you'll be back to dinner, Lewis?' said his cousin in a tone of pique. 'You know we have people coming here this evening.'

'Of course, but why?' And here he stopped short, quite afraid of persuading Maria to come out, if it should prove 'the one thing Rachel did not want,' as she always declared every contrary circumstance in life to be.

'I'm not coming, you need not be afraid,' said Maria in a tone of wounded feeling.

Rachel's entrance precluded any further controversy; and Lewis, looking rather grave and 'put out,' followed Rachel down to the beach.

There she found her cousin and Arthur Faulkenor laying cloaks and cushions in the boat, which attention and homage, having been accustomed to from infancy, she took as her right and as a matter of course.

Rachel Westmacott's nature was one that thrived in the warm atmosphere of love; and in after-years, when life and its troubles pressed harshly upon her, the genial, softening influences that had surrounded her childhood stood her in good stead, and gave her heart and hope, when many who had been more inured to suffering would have been soured and dispirited.

'How charming! how delightful!' exclaimed Rachel, as the boat pushed off, and seemed to dance on the top of the waves. 'There is wind enough, and yet not too much.'

'You'll be sick if there is any more,' returned her brother; 'so it's to be hoped there won't be.'

'Sick! why, I never was sick but once in my life. Of course I sha'n't,' and Rachel took off her bonnet, and let the wind play with her soft brown hair, as she leant over the side of the boat and dabbled her fingers in the water.

'No fear of more wind to-day,' said the old boatman in an oracular tone; 'it'll be dropping altogether just now, or I'm much mistaken.'

'Then we had better keep close ashore, perhaps?' asked Lewis doubtfully, as the little boat, with every sail set, seemed almost flying over the water.

'As you like, sir; we ain't so far out now but what we could row in, and the wind mayn't drop yet awhile.'

'It will be all right, Lewis; now sing with me. It's easier to sing on the sea than anywhere,' said Rachel, as in a clear soprano she began to sing one of the Irish melodies. Her brother sang a good second; and for some time there was no sound but those two young clear voices and the ripple of the waves against the boat-side.

'Lewis, I do believe I'm hungry,' suddenly exclaimed Rachel,

looking half-frightened, as if some terrible calamity had befallen them.

‘Really,’ he replied, laughing; ‘that’s because you despised the shrimps I brought you for breakfast. I don’t know what’s to be done; we have not even a fishing-net on board, or we might catch some fish and cook them for you perhaps. Would you like to go back home again?’

‘No, not at all; why didn’t we bring some luncheon with us? Look, there’s a ship; we’ll ask the sailors for some biscuit. Is she coming this way?’

‘It is a big Indiaman going up to London; she won’t come much further in. She’s been lying about in the offing this day or two, waiting for a pilot, perhaps.’

‘O, Lewis, let’s go on board. I never saw a big ship in all my life. Do you think we can?’ exclaimed Rachel, turning to the old man, and standing up, in her eagerness to see the ship.

‘Maybe as likely as not. I’ve often taken parties as wanted to go aboard the ships before they got into the river, for they are sometimes a week before they can land the passengers in London.’

‘I don’t think it would do for you, Rachel; it’s a merchant-vessel, and I don’t see how I could take you on board.’

‘Never mind, only go and see; they’ll give me a biscuit, at all events.’

‘We can go alongside her, sir, if the lady likes; there can be no harm in that.’

‘Yes, certainly,’ said Rachel. ‘Lewis, I must go. How long will it take?’

‘She’s coming this way; it won’t take long;’ and soon the vessel stood out before them, making the little boat look so insignificant that Rachel said she felt like a shrimp before a whale.

Slowly and majestically the ship seemed bearing down upon them till the little cockleshell of a boat was dancing in the trough of her waves. In some mysterious language, the sailors had been given to understand that a lady and gentleman wanted to come on board, and the Captain ordered a rope-ladder to be thrown down into the boat. Poor Rachel looked very much disappointed as she said:

‘I can’t climb up that, can I?’ And she looked wistfully up the ship’s side, which towered like a great black mountain over her head.

‘Of course not; you must not dream of it. I will just run

up and see if I can get you some biscuit. Sit still ; I sha'n't be a minute.'

Very disconsolate, Rachel sat down, watching the rope-ladder swaying about with every movement of the ship, and her wish to go on board grew stronger and stronger every minute.

'Don't you think you two could hold the ladder steady enough for me to get up?' she asked.

'Ay, ay, we could hold it,' said the younger man; 'but whether you could climb it, is another thing.'

'Let me try,' she said eagerly, 'only a step or two: if I can't, I'll come down again.'

'Better not be so venturesome, miss; it's harder than you think,' said the old fisherman.

'I'll only try. Now, have you got it steady?' And she ran lightly up the first few steps. Then came a heavy lurch of the ship, and the rope swayed far from the boat. The ship rose still far above her head; she had a sudden feeling of being alone in the world, with the deep green sea below, and the sky over her head. She turned sick and dizzy, and the thought that she should be drowned came vividly before her. To the lookers-on she only seemed to hesitate for a moment, but that moment to her seemed a lifetime.

'I must go on—I will,' she said aloud; and by a tremendous effort she fixed her eyes only on the ship, and continued her ascent. One of the sailors saw her, and leaned forward to give her his hand. It was not till she felt the deck beneath her feet that she realised the terrible danger she had passed.

Her brother did not see her at first. He was talking to the Captain on the other side of the deck. But the sailors and passengers crowded around her, some declaring they had not seen a human being since they left Calcutta, others eagerly inquiring if it was true that she had climbed the rope-ladder, and expressing their astonishment at such a feat. Poor Rachel was getting very shy, and heartily wished herself back in the boat, especially as Lewis came up to her at that moment with rather a disapproving face.

'Why did you come, Rachel? I told you not.'

'But I wanted so very much,' she pleaded; 'and now I am here quite safe, may I see the ship?'

'Some of the passengers are at dinner in the large cabin, but the lady can go down if she likes,' said the Captain civilly.

'O yes, I should; and perhaps I could get some biscuit!'

Down the steep stairs, and into the hot, steaming cabin,

where some very dusky-looking men and women seemed to be eating rice and curry, Rachel and Lewis were ushered. To their dismay, the party assembled there all rose, entreating them to take a morsel of something. They should be so glad to hear some English news. But the manner and the accent, and the whole scene, was so new to Rachel, that her hunger vanished at once, and even her desire to see more of the ship; and she told her brother she was quite ready to return. But they had to drink a glass of wine before the Captain could be satisfied, and Lewis took the precaution to obtain a supply of biscuit from the steward. In order to do this he had lingered rather behind, and when he came on deck a very unexpected sight presented itself. Rachel was leaning over a mattress, on which a man was lying wrapped up in cloaks, and sheltered as much as possible from the wind; yet he seemed shivering, as if from cold, and the ghastly gray tinge that overspread his features looked more livid every time the fresh March wind, though tempered by a brilliant sunshine, swept past him. On a low seat at his feet sat a tall, fair man, anxiously watching him, with as much vigour, health, and contentment in his kindly smile and genial manner as the countenance of his companion expressed the reverse. All this struck Lewis as he glanced at the group before him; but how Rachel had contrived to make herself one of the party, or why she should apparently be taking a dying man under her protection, he was at a loss to imagine. It seemed something beyond even her vagaries. She was evidently promising something, at which the sick man's friend seemed to demur.

‘O, Lewis, I am so glad you are come; I want to ask you something. This poor man—gentleman,’ she said, blushing, and correcting herself, ‘is so very ill, and we can take him home, can't we?’

Her brother's astonishment was too great for him to be able to answer her immediately. He looked at the sick man's friend for some explanation.

Where was the home to which he was to be taken? and why should they undertake the charge of a sick man? It seemed such an extraordinary idea, that he felt as if Rachel must be losing her senses to entertain it for a moment.

‘Well,’ said Rachel, impatient at receiving no reply, ‘of course we can; so he had better come at once. He has had a very bad fever, and is still extremely weak and ill.’

‘What can you mean, Rachel? remonstrated her brother, in a low voice. ‘You must be crazy! You know nothing of

this man, except that he has had a fever. Do you wish to catch it?

‘O, sir,’ said the sick man, raising himself up with difficulty, and looking earnestly at Lewis with eyes that seemed unnaturally large, and clasping his thin hands in the intensity of his emotion, ‘I have been ill ever since we left Calcutta, and, expecting to land to-day, have been carried on deck. They tell me now that no passengers may be landed here, that we shall be some days going up the river. I feel that I shall never live to set my foot again in England. This lady offered to land us at Hastings.’

Here he paused, and looked wistfully from one to the other.

‘You are only weak now,’ said his friend soothingly; ‘I dare-say, as you have weathered so much, you may weather a little more; and it would probably be inconvenient to this gentleman to set us ashore.’

Lewis felt extremely perplexed, for his naturally kind heart was touched by the evident illness and anxiety of the sick man. He turned to the Captain, and asked what had been the matter with him.

‘A sharp attack of fever,’ replied the Captain, ‘but that passed off long ago; lately he has been nearly dying of weakness, kept up by sea-sickness, from which he has never been free.’

‘Then you think there would be no risk to my sister if we landed him?—risk of infection, I mean.’

‘None in the world. It would be a kind act, for the man has been a terrible sufferer. I never thought he would have lived to see England. That friend of his is one in a thousand. He has nursed him day and night, and has never been put out by his whims or complaints, for he’s as fanciful as a sick child.’

‘Well,’ said Rachel impatiently, coming up to Lewis, ‘had we not better go?’

‘We are talking of your taking that poor sick man along with you, young lady,’ began the Captain.

‘We shall do that, of course,’ said Rachel, rather abruptly; ‘the question is, how to do it, for he can’t get down that rope-ladder into our boat.’

Lewis still looked undecided, but his sister’s stronger will carried the day. If they could have foretold the results of their kindness, they would rather have seen the sick man die before their eyes than have been the means of taking him ashore.

Another difficulty now presented itself to Lewis’s mind. Their boat was not a large one, and two more passengers, with possibly some luggage, would certainly be objected to by the

sailors who brought them. Rachel, however, anticipated this objection by saying :

‘Don’t let those men make any difficulties, Lewis ; give them this.’ And she slipped half a sovereign into his hand.

The suddenness of the whole proceeding had somewhat bewildered her brother, and he had some doubts in his mind as to whether he was being very kind and charitable or only very foolish in spoiling Rachel. She, however, was quite in her element, delighted to do a kind action, and charmed with the novelty of the adventure.

The Captain was only too glad to facilitate their departure, and Rachel saw, with great satisfaction, that the sailors were preparing a chair, in which they could be lowered into the boat.

‘I am afraid you can scarcely have room for us both,’ said the sick man’s friend to Lewis, with his bright, cheery smile, ‘and yet if you take Colonel Clargis, I believe I am a necessary evil.’

‘There is no difficulty about that,’ replied Lewis, ‘but we could not stow away much luggage.’

‘We shall not have much : two carpet-bags will hold all that we shall want for a week. The bulk of the luggage must go on to London.’

‘Then do let us get into the boat first, Lewis,’ said Rachel, ‘and then we shall be out of the way.’

She was taken at her word, for at a sign from the Captain, who was standing by, she was whipped up by a sailor and placed in the chair that had been prepared to let them down ; and as soon as she recovered from her surprise, she was relieved to find an easier way of returning to the boat than the rope-ladder she had so perilously ascended. She busied herself at once in arranging a place for the sick man to lie down, and making it as comfortable as was possible under the circumstances ; then she stood up to watch his descent into the boat, which was accomplished with a good deal more difficulty than hers had been, from his extreme weakness. At last, however, the two carpet-bags were thrown down, and they left the ship’s side. In her excitement Rachel had forgotten her hunger, but now was really glad to turn to the biscuit which Lewis had procured from the steward, and even to drink a little wine from a flask which the sick man’s friend offered to her, and which he always carried about for his use.

The little boat did not make much way, for the wind was dead against her, and her freight heavier. Even Rachel began to think the time tedious as she sat speculating upon the history of

the two men who had so unexpectedly come across their path. She glanced at the names on the carpet-bags—Colonel Clargis. ‘How little like a soldier he looks!’ she thought; ‘I wonder if he has ever been in a battle? He never can have been strong enough for active service, so weak and thin, and such a colour.’ Rachel did not understand the havoc that the climate of India makes with the strongest English constitution. ‘Mr. F. Newstead. I wonder what he is? Not a soldier, I suppose, as he’s only a Mr. It’s a good kind face. It’s odd he’s so silent. I wish he would say something.’

So with this wish in her mind, and a sudden feeling that she was dull, she spoke to him, and tried to elicit something of their antecedents, but with very little success, for he seemed to be entirely occupied in considering what would be the best means to provide for his friend’s comfort when they landed. It was evident that none of his attention was to be given to Rachel, which, as the scheme of bringing away the sick man had originated with her, and as she was quite unaccustomed to anything approaching to neglect, did not altogether please her.

She began to suggest some plan, but was quickly cut short by the old boatman.

‘Lord bless ye, miss, he’d never bear all that bother and palavering. If you and the gentlemen will just run up to the hotel and order his room, Jem and I can carry him up as easy as nothing. He can be put into bed at once, and stop there till he’s more fit to move. They have always everything ready and comfortable up there.’

There could be no objection to this very sensible suggestion. The sick man heaved a weary sigh, as if longing for the time when he should be once more lying in a comfortable bed; and Lewis kept looking at his watch, and asking how much longer they would be kept out, anxious on account of his uncle, who would be quite sure to be alarmed at their long absence.

Every one seemed growing fidgety and uneasy, except the boatmen, who took the delay phlegmatically enough, knowing that at all events they should gain by it. At last came the welcome grating sounds of the boat upon the shingly shore. Rachel and Lewis jumped out, and were preparing to run up the bank, when she turned round and said in rather a haughty manner:

‘Do you wish us to order rooms for you at the hotel?’

‘If you please, as soon as possible,’ replied the sick man’s friend, without even observing Rachel’s change of manner, or saying a word in recognition of her services.

‘Well, if that’s not ungracious!’ she exclaimed, as they slowly and laboriously climbed up the shingles into the street; ‘I’ve a great mind not to go near the hotel.’

‘Never mind,’ said Lewis impatiently; ‘of course the man must have some place to go to, and we must order his room. We can’t do any more for him. I can only think of uncle Henry. He will be in one of his nervous fits, and no wonder—just think how long we’ve been away!’

Rachel had not forgotten this, and at that moment it made her more uneasy than she cared to own. She said that it would be best for her to go at once to the Crescent, and Lewis could follow her as soon as he had been to the hotel. He agreed to this; and as soon as he was out of sight she ran all the way, and arrived breathless and panting at her uncle’s door. Her knock was answered by the old butler.

‘Thank God you’re safe, Miss Rachel! Sir Henry’s been in such a way—dreadful! It will undo all the doctor’s done for this month past. They are all gone to dinner now, for as I told Sir Henry—“Let it be as it will, Sir Henry, all things are worse to bear on an empty stomach,”—and so they are.’

‘Very likely; and so I will go into the dining-room at once,’ said Rachel, provoked by this pompous harangue. She glided by him into the dining-room, standing for a moment by the door to catch Horace’s eye.

‘At last!’ he exclaimed. ‘Papa, here is Rachel, quite safe, after all. Where is Lewis?’

‘Coming directly. I had better dine at once, and dress after, hadn’t I, uncle Henry?’

‘I really don’t care what you do,’ he replied in a querulous tone. ‘I am much too ill to care what anybody does, or for anything, except to get to bed as soon as possible.’

‘You can’t, papa,’ said Maria, looking reproachfully at her cousin, ‘when there are people coming in the evening.’

Rachel, who very much disliked the idea of being ‘in a scrape,’ and who had meant to create a great deal of interest in the minds of her cousins by the graphic account she was prepared to give of her adventure, had to content herself with eating her dinner in silence, and casting comic glances of despair at Horace, who sat opposite to her.

‘I suppose Rachel has told you what detained us?’ said Lewis, going up to his uncle. ‘I was afraid you would think we were lost.’

‘Rachel has told me nothing, and I wish to hear nothing.’

One thing I am determined upon, and that is that there shall be no more boating from this house. I am not going to spend such another day for anybody's fancy.'

'Why?' asked Rachel, instantly roused into antagonism. 'You knew we were safe in such fine weather.'

Her uncle did not vouchsafe her any reply, and she was obliged to eat her dinner in silence, not without resentment against what she considered the injustice with which she was treated.

The next day Rachel speculated a great deal upon the probability of a call from the sick man's friend. She said so much about it that Lewis offered to go up to the hotel to inquire how he was; but this she would not consent to, thinking she had already not been treated with sufficient gratitude and consideration.

'As if those people could tell where you lived,' said Horace disdainfully.

'As if "those people," as you call them, could not ask the boatmen, or the people at the inn, and find out as easily as possible. If this kind-looking man don't come, I shall believe that there is no gratitude in human nature,' returned Rachel. A conclusion to which she was obliged to come, however reluctantly; for though the weather was wet and stormy, and she was kept at home all day, no one called, and nothing farther was heard either of the sick man or his friend.

The fact was that the next day Colonel Clargis had become much worse, and his friend had called in medical advice. When the doctor saw him he told Mr. Newstead at once that the case was so precarious that any relations he might have should be apprised of his condition.

On inquiry, Mr. Newstead found that Colonel Clargis's sister lived at Tunbridge. He sent to her, begging her to come and take charge of her brother at once, as he should be obliged to go to London to receive the luggage when the ship came in.

Almost before he could have expected her, the sister arrived. Colonel Clargis could not be moved for some days; but at last he was able to be carried downstairs, and put into the bed-carriage she had brought for him. Mrs. Dickenson begged Mr. Newstead to accompany them, but that was impossible. He saw them drive off, with a distinct feeling of relief at being free from the anxiety that had weighed upon him for so many weeks.

Francis Newstead was still the same indolent being that we knew him at Bridge End, and the prospect of a few days with 'nothing to do' was particularly pleasant to him.

The first use he made of his leisure was to take a long country walk. The sights and sounds of a spring day in England were exquisite enjoyment after his long exile, and he soon turned off the high-road and walked across green fields and into narrow lanes bounded by hedge-rows faintly tipped with green, and steep mossy banks enamelled with violets and primroses, in a kind of dreamy enjoyment. On and on he sauntered without any definite purpose, listening to the birds that seemed to be carolling on every side, watching the village children trooping home from school, and listening to the whistle of the plough-boy as he led his horses over ridge and furrow, turning up the soft earth that seemed to have a fragrance of its own. It was all so new and yet so old, so linked with the past, that the years which had elapsed since his own boyhood and the present time seemed to fade away, and the weary middle-aged man felt once more a boy.

He stood leaning over a gate, musing on the past and the present, when his eye was attracted by a picturesque old house about a quarter of a mile off. It stood at the foot of a hill, nestling under some fine old trees, among which the gray church-tower and the cottage roofs of a small hamlet could be seen.

There was an old-fashioned garden, surrounded by a fine yew hedge. The sunlight was streaming full on the stone gables, and glittering on the mullioned windows. As he looked at it, he could not help wishing that some such English home awaited him—it looked a perfect haven of rest and comfort.

‘Who does that old house belong to, my boy?’ he asked, stopping a ragged urchin who was making unearthly noises to scare away the birds from the young corn in the next field.

‘That house yon? that be Luscombe Hall—Squire Erle’s.’

‘Squire Erle’s! Luscombe Hall!’ Surely those words came to Francis Newstead with a familiar sound! Surely that was the home of his old school-fellow Julian Erle? he remembered that his father lived in Sussex. How much he should like to see him again! He had never even heard of him since the sad parting at Bridge End. He did not know a single person in Hastings, and it would be a real pleasure to talk over old times. As he approached the house, it struck him that it looked remarkably still and deserted, but he was determined to make the experiment. He rang the bell, which was answered by an untidy-looking girl, who seemed unable to give him any information as to whether Mr. Erle could see him.

‘He was always there, because he was so ill,’ she said, and seemed to think it extraordinary that any one should think of seeing him ; but as Francis Newstead did not appear to take her view of the case, she proposed to fetch Mrs. Sims.

Mrs. Sims was an elderly, respectable-looking female, dressed in black, and from her he learned that Mr. Erle was always confined to his room, having become quite a cripple from rheumatic gout ; that Mrs. Erle and the children were in London, and the servants gone away for a holiday. She did not suppose that Mr. Erle would be equal to seeing a stranger.

‘But I am not a stranger,’ said Francis Newstead, with the bright smile that invariably captivated every one. ‘Take my card up to him, and tell him it would give me the greatest pleasure to see him, and that I’ve only just returned to England. I suppose it’s the same person—we were school-fellows—his name was Julian?’

‘Yes, that’s his name,’ said the woman, quite won by Francis Newstead’s kind and affable manner. ‘Well, I’ll go and see ; maybe a little company might do him good. Mrs. Erle and the children have been in London a week, and no one left here but that drab of a girl ; so I just come up here in the day to see to the poor gentleman, and do the bit of cooking he wants, but I live up yonder,’ she said, pointing to the village, ‘ever since I married.’

‘Has Mr. Erle been long ill?’

‘On and off for the last twelve years, and now it’s settled so in his joints that he can hardly move at all. But if you’ll walk into this room, I’ll just go up and tell him you’re here.’

She opened the door of a dreary-looking wainscoted room, with old red curtains, and dirty white paint, on which as he could see traces of children’s devastation, he concluded it must be the schoolroom.

Presently Mrs. Sims returned. ‘If you will walk up, Mr. Erle will be glad to see you.’ And then she added in a lower voice, ‘Perhaps you won’t stop long, sir ; hearing of you seemed quite to upset him ; he looks very poorly to-day.’

At the top of the stairs was a broad, old-fashioned corridor, fitted up like a room. There were doors on each side, and Mrs. Sims opened the one which was the nearest, but did not come into the room.

Francis Newstead was so startled at the sight of his friend, that he was quite afraid of betraying what he felt. The man before him was such a complete wreck, so shrunk and with such

an expression of distress in his countenance, that he was a most painful sight to look upon. As a boy, Julian Erle had very marked features, and Francis Newstead remembered him at once, but something in his appearance shocked him and took away all power of speech.

Happily, Julian Erle was so nervous that he did not seem as if he observed anything. He scarcely raised his eyes, as his old schoolfellow came up and greeted him warmly.

‘How glad I am to see you, Erle! but grieve to find you in this state. I had no idea you were such a sufferer.’

‘You have been away so long,’ replied Erle with a faint smile; ‘I suppose you have not heard much about your old friends?’

‘Little enough for these twelve years. But what a lucky chance to meet you now! We left Calcutta two months ago, and should have landed in London, but I had a friend on board who has been so ill all through the voyage that they landed him at Hastings. I remained with him till his sister could come; and as I’d nothing particular to do, I took a long stretch into the country, and, strange to say, lighted on you; but I wish you seemed more prosperous, old fellow.’

Again a sickly smile, which was more like a spasm than a smile, distorted Julian Erle’s features as he said—

‘I am what the world would call prosperous, I suppose, barring my being such a helpless log. I have not been able to walk since last summer. But my wife is well, and my two boys are fine healthy lads.’

‘I should like to see them very much. Are you all alone in the house, Erle?’

‘Yes: my wife has gone to her mother in London; and as I could not attend to the children, she took them with her. This week, too, even the servants are gone for a holiday, otherwise I should have begged you to take compassion on me, and spend a day or two here; but it would be asking you to a comfortless abode.’

‘The idea of talking of comfort to a man who has been two months on board ship!’ said Newstead, laughing; ‘why, the very fact of having space to move in, good bread and fresh water, are luxurious to me now.’

‘Then will you bring your things up here to-morrow? Mrs. Sims will do her best for you. She’s a clean, tidy woman, though not much of a hand at cooking.’

‘I shall like it extremely,’ returned Newstead, rising to go.

‘It will be useless for me to go to London before the end of the week, and there is nothing very attractive at Hastings, where I don’t know a creature; and to meet an old friend in this way is such a piece of unexpected good luck.’

PART II.

THE next day found him established at Luscombe. Mrs. Sims showed him into his room, which was at the end of the broad passage, on the same side as Mr. Erle’s. It was a more sunny and cheerful room than the one in which Julian Erle was lying, and Francis Newstead wondered he did not take possession of it. The window looked on a good-sized garden, over woodland, field, and common, with the sea lying still and blue in the distance. In all his wanderings in the most magnificent tropical countries, Francis Newstead had always thirsted for a quiet woodland scene like this, and he stood still, drinking it in silently, as if he could not see it enough. He had dined early at Hastings, so as to give less trouble to his friend’s destitute *ménage*. The tea was brought into Julian Erle’s room. Fresh yellow butter, rich cream, home-baked bread—all the greatest luxuries to a man after a long sea-voyage, and years spent in a climate where the fare is so different.

There was much talk between the two friends that evening—much to hear of foreign lands, much to tell of political changes and events at home; but both by a sort of instinct avoided speaking of their school life, and Bridge End was never mentioned.

Francis Newstead had quite won Mrs. Sims’s heart, and she took considerable trouble the next morning to prepare a good breakfast for him. It was laid in the wainscoted parlour he had seen the day before, but she reserved the completion of an omelette—a dish upon which she especially prided herself—till she should hear him come downstairs.

After some time, she went up to Mr. Erle’s room to ask if she should tell his guest that breakfast was waiting, but he advised her not to disturb him, as he was probably enjoying the luxury of a comfortable bed.

‘You need not be uneasy about him, Mrs. Sims,’ he said, smiling at her evident disappointment; ‘he is sure to wake when he is hungry, and then he will enjoy all your good things doubly.’

But morning passed into noon, and that seemed waning into afternoon, without anything being heard of his visitor; then Mr. Erle expressed surprise at his friend's tardiness, and sent Mrs. Sims to see if he were still asleep.

'Perhaps he has gone out without breakfast,' he added; 'people who have been abroad all their lives keep such different hours.'

'I thought of that, sir; but his hat and stick are in the hall just where he left them yesterday. No, I don't think he is gone out.'

She went to the bedroom, and knocked repeatedly without receiving any reply. At last she opened the door; but the window-curtains were closed, and till her eyes became accustomed to the dim light she could see nothing.

She walked to the foot of the bed, and gently drew aside the curtain, so as not to disturb the sleeping man. The cry of horror that escaped her rang through the house. It not only startled Mr. Erle in his bedroom, but brought the girl upstairs breathless from the kitchen. She rushed into the room, to find Mrs. Sims looking as if turned into stone, gazing with a face of white terror upon the corpse of the unhappy man, lying partly across the bed, which was saturated with blood, with the fearful gash across his throat that not only told of sudden death, but the far more fearful tale of murder. Terrified and appalled, she turned away, and was flying downstairs, when she heard Mr. Erle calling her, and his bell ring violently and repeatedly. Glad to give vent to her alarm, she rushed into his room, breathless and panting.

'What's the matter?' he said angrily; 'what means all this noise and screaming that I hear? Where's Mrs. Sims?'

'She's there, sir, with him,' sobbed the girl, 'and he's all along the bed, and it's all blood!' and she added, coming close up to Julian, and lowering her voice as if the very sound of it frightened her, 'I think he's dead.'

'Dead! who is dead? you are mad, I think,' he shouted. 'Send Mrs. Sims, you idiot!' and he sank back on his pillow just as Mrs. Sims, who had heard his voice, entered the room.

'O, sir, O, Mr. Erle, how can I tell you? Sarah, run for my husband and the doctor. O, but it's no good now, is it?' she said, looking round her in a wild, helpless way; 'and I never can be left alone.'

Sarah, however, glad to escape from the dreadful scene, as well as to be the bearer of such startling intelligence, was gone before she could stop her.

'You are as great a fool as that girl,' exclaimed her master, in a frenzy of passion. 'What is all this confounded row about, and where is Newstead?'

'That's it—it's him—he's dead—cold—murdered in his bed,' and Mrs. Sims's nerves gave way, and she sank upon a chair in an agony of passionate and hysterical weeping.

'I don't believe it—it's impossible,' said Julian Erle, in a low voice, apparently subdued by the sudden shock. 'Do you mean that Mr. Newstead has committed suicide?'

'O, perhaps he did, poor gentleman! perhaps he killed himself. To think that such a thing should happen while I am here, and the missus away, and all! I've sent for the doctor; he'll know how it was.'

'There was no use in sending for a doctor,' said Julian Erle impatiently; 'he was odd always—odd—had bad spirits, woman, I tell you. Had he a pistol?'

'No, sir; I saw nothing, though I looked round,' she said, shuddering; 'and his throat cut from ear to ear. He never could do it himself.'

'He must have done it, I tell you. Here, give me my dressing-gown. I feel too ill to get up to-day. When Dr. Cartwright comes I'll see him.'

'Lord a mercy, sir! it's a blessing you can't get up to see what I've seen this day. I'd sooner never move any more than see such a sight again.'

There was no lack of visitors that day at Luscombe Hill. Horror and curiosity soon collected all the villagers into the kitchen, till, worn out and weary of the uproar, Julian Erle sent for the clergyman, begging him to restore order, and superintend all necessary arrangements both for the funeral and the inquest.

'Has not the unfortunate man any friends or relations?' said Mr. Ellis; 'and should not they be communicated with?'

'He may have, but I know nothing of them. The greatest part of his life has been spent in India. He landed a few days ago at Hastings, and came here quite by chance, and I asked him to stay.'

'Did it strike you that there was anything odd or unusual in his manner?'

'I can scarcely tell. He was quite a boy when I saw him last. I thought him a little excitable, perhaps; nothing more.'

Mr. Ellis undertook to do all that was needful. Julian Erle said that he wished to defray every expense.

The room was locked up till the inquest, the next day, and

half the village volunteered to keep the two poor panic-stricken women company; and no one in the house but Julian Erle passed that night in bed.

Very little light was thrown upon the matter the next day; but there was a growing feeling of certainty, confirmed by the surgeon who was sent for from Hastings, that the case was one of murder and not suicide. Yet it seemed impossible, for who could have committed the crime? The only inmates of the house were a helpless cripple, and a young girl who could have had no motive, or, indeed, physical strength for such an act.

Mrs. Sims was closely questioned as to the character of the girl, Sarah Allen, and also as to her manner when she first saw her in the morning.

Mrs. Sims said she believed the girl to be as good and honest a girl as ever lived—might be a bit careless, perhaps, but then all girls were.

‘Had she any “followers”? was it likely that she could have admitted any one into the house?’

‘None that she knew of. Her friends lived at some distance; and moreover Sarah was such a coward, she did not believe she would get up in the night for anybody. Why should any one have killed the poor gentleman? His things were just as he left them—watch and purse on the table.’

The coroner inquired if the girl had said anything about Mr. Newstead to her.

‘Not a word. She only said she’d taken up his water and boots, but had not gone into the room, as it seemed a pity to disturb him.’

This evidently produced an unfavourable impression towards the girl, who had been previously examined, but now was recalled. She looked strong and healthy, and appeared about eighteen, with fair complexion and a countenance of no particular expression.

She came in looking frightened, and changed colour when the coroner said to her sharply:

‘Why did you tell Mrs. Sims that it would be a pity to disturb Mr. Newstead?’

‘I don’t know, sir. It seemed a pity, as he slept so sound,’ she said, looking round her in a helpless, bewildered way.

‘And pray how do you know that he did sleep sound?’ he said, looking at her sternly.

‘Because he said nothing when I knocked, sir; no other how.’

It had evidently never crossed the girl’s mind that any sus-

picion could rest upon her. But Mrs. Sims perceived at once the course affairs were taking, and as she had no doubt of the girl's perfect innocence, the manner of the coroner shot through her with a sense of sudden physical pain. She inquired if she was needed any longer, and on being dismissed, went to Mr. Erle's room. She felt that at that moment she could not see Sarah Allen.

'I don't know what the gentlemen down there may be thinking of,' she said, 'but they've had Sarah up again, and questioned her very close. It's certain she'd no more hand in it than the babe unborn; so I do hope they won't get such a notion into their heads; it would be the ruin of the girl, and the death of her mother.'

'Nonsense,' replied Mr. Erle, 'you are always fancying something. There is only one thing likely, and that is that he killed himself.'

'O! both doctors say it's impossible, sir,' said Mrs. Sims gloomily. 'They had another come from Hastings to-day. O! why has such trouble come upon this house!'

A few minutes after, Mr. Ellis entered the room.

'I thought you would be anxious to hear the result of the inquest,' he said. 'I am sorry to tell you that there is no doubt that the unhappy man was murdered, and though the evidence against your servant is but slight, the coroner thinks it his duty to issue a warrant for her apprehension, in order that she should be tried at the assizes next month. I must say it seems to be a most improbable thing that she should be guilty; still, there are circumstances—'

'What circumstances?' asked Mr. Erle quickly. 'What possible evidence can there be that would criminate this girl?'

'Only slight evidence, as I said, at present; her anxiety that he should not be disturbed in the morning, and one of your large dinner-knives being found upon the bed, which I understand are in her charge. Mr. Newstead having dined at Hastings, could not have used the knife. Besides, she was the only person in the house, as far as we can discover, at the time.'

'It's a preposterous idea,' exclaimed Mr. Erle indignantly. 'As to his not being called early, I advised the same thing, and Mrs. Sims also, I believe. I suppose they will take bail?'

'I don't know—I should hardly think so. But I daresay we can accommodate you with a servant till Mrs. Erle returns, and then I hope she will be acquitted at the assizes.'

'I will bear any expense. She must have the best legal

advice—or, give me a pen and ink; I will write myself this very day.’

‘There is no such immediate hurry,’ said Mr. Ellis soothingly; ‘something may yet be discovered. You must not allow this sad event to prey upon you. I hope you have sent for Mrs. Erle? The funeral is to take place to-morrow.’

‘She had better keep away from this cursed place,’ he said vehemently; ‘but remember, there must be no expense spared—none.’

After the funeral, a more settled gloom fell upon the deserted-looking house at Luscombe Hill. Mrs. Erle was recalled by the sudden and dangerous illness of her husband, and Sarah Allen was imprisoned in Lewes gaol.

‘Lewis!—Maria!—do listen to this,’ exclaimed Rachel Westmacott, as she took up the newspaper which was lying on the table. ‘How very dreadful!’

‘Fancy Rachel turning politician at last,’ said Horace laughing.

‘This has nothing to do with politics,’ said Rachel, quietly laying the newspaper down and turning away.

There was a look in her face that made Lewis go up to her, saying,

‘What is it? Is it this?—“Dreadful mysterious occurrence.”’

‘Do tell us what is the matter, as Rachel seems mysterious too,’ said Maria, who was copying music at the other end of the room.

He obeyed, and read the following paragraph aloud :

‘DREADFUL AND MYSTERIOUS OCCURRENCE.—A murder, almost unexampled in its atrocity, was committed in this neighbourhood on Friday night. The scene of the tragedy is Luscombe Hill, the property of Julian Erle, Esq. The cause of the murder, and its perpetrator, is at present enveloped in the deepest mystery, though some suspicion is attached to the housemaid, a girl of eighteen, who has been taken into custody. It appears that a friend of Mr. Erle’s, who had spent many years in India, landed last week at Hastings, and walked over on Thursday to Luscombe Hill. Mr. Erle, who was suffering from severe indisposition, begged him to come and stay with him a few days. The next day he did so. On Saturday, surprised to see nothing of his guest, he sent to see if he were ill, when a woman from the village, who was acting as housekeeper, entered the room. She found the unfortunate man weltering in his blood, and with his throat cut from ear to ear. There is no appearance of any robbery

having been committed, or of any one having entered the house ; the only inmates at the time were Mr. Erle, who is confined to his bed and crippled from rheumatic gout, and the servant Sarah Allen, who will be tried at the assizes next month. The unhappy gentleman's name was Newstead.'

'Newstead?' repeated Lewis; 'why that's the man—'

'Yes,' said Rachel in an unnaturally quiet voice; 'and if we hadn't brought him, it would not have happened.'

'It's useless to think of secondary causes,' returned her brother. 'It's really very dreadful. He was not the sick man?'

'No; the bright, happy-looking man, with the beautiful smile,' she replied. 'It's a very strange thing. There seems to have been no possible reason for it; and as to a girl of eighteen committing such a crime, it's simply absurd.'

'But you see they talk of circumstances,' said Lewis.

'So they may; but she never did it,' said Rachel. 'Where is she to be tried?'

'At the assizes, you see, next month.'

'Then I shall go and hear the trial,' said Rachel decidedly.

'I think not,' said Lewis; 'I don't believe we shall be here. Don't be a goose; it is absurd to worry yourself about this, for it's certain you are not in the remotest way concerned in it.'

'I wonder if the other man is dead too,' said Rachel dreamily. She was very silent all that day.

The murder at Luscombe Hill was the universal topic of conversation. Every one was full of it, especially Dr. Cartwright, who came to see Sir Henry a day or two after the inquest. He was an elderly man, very clever and intelligent, and a great favourite with Rachel. She lingered in the room while he was talking, deeply interested in every detail. She felt in some way mixed up with it, and could not shake off a feeling of self-reproach for having brought the unhappy man to Hastings. She did not always give way to this, for her strong common sense often stood her in good stead; but at night, or if she was not well, her quick feelings and sensitive nature would somewhat overpower her better judgment. It was evident that the sad tragedy had taken a vivid hold of her imagination, and she took a lively interest in the fate of the girl, whom she believed to have been unjustly accused.

'You cannot believe that girl guilty, can you, Dr. Cartwright?' she asked eagerly.

'It is difficult to do so, and so impossible to conceive her

motive ; and yet one never knows. Sometimes a temporary insanity seems to take possession of people, which prompts them to such acts.'

'Perhaps she is a sleep-walker,' suggested Rachel.

'I should not imagine so, or it would have been known. She looks like a perfectly commonplace healthy girl. The only real evidence against her is the knife found upon the bed, which certainly was in her charge.'

'Who else was in the house?'

'No one. The woman who acts as housekeeper is married, and goes home at night, and Mr. Erle is a complete cripple and almost bed-ridden.'

'Perhaps that woman's husband—'

'William Sims ! Impossible. He is sexton and parish clerk, and the most harmless of mortals.'

'I do wish the real murderer could be found,' said Rachel eagerly ; 'I know that girl will be convicted, and she certainly is innocent.'

'Have you any further revelations on the subject?' said Dr. Cartwright, amused at her vehemence.

'You are laughing at me, I see, Dr. Cartwright,' said Rachel, colouring ; 'but I care a great deal about this. The poor man would have been safe in London but for me. We landed him and a sick friend of his here the other day. They had come from Calcutta, and the sick man could not bear the delay of going up the river, so Lewis and I brought them to Hastings. When I saw the account in the newspaper, I knew it was the same. Then for that poor girl to be hung, if she is innocent, is such a fearful thing !'

'I am not laughing at you, indeed, my dear young lady,' said Dr. Cartwright earnestly. 'It's the most perplexing case I ever came across. I have pondered over it till, against my better judgment, I began to think the man must have committed suicide.'

'Perhaps he did,' said Rachel eagerly ; 'are you sure he did not?'

'Quite sure. It was impossible.'

'Some one might have got into the house. Is this girl sure that she heard no noise?'

'I suppose not, as she did not say so.'

'But if she is the sort of stupid girl you seem to describe, she would not volunteer anything, I should think. I wonder no one asked her.'

‘Mrs. Sims said she was a dreadful coward, and that nothing would make her get up in the night.’

‘But that proves nothing,’ persisted Rachel. ‘Can’t you ask her? Are you likely to see her again?’

‘Not at all likely; but sure to see the chaplain of the gaol at Lewes. I will talk to him about her.’

‘This event seems to have made a great impression on your niece, Sir Henry,’ said the doctor, as Rachel left the room.

‘Yes, she is an excitable child; and then her having landed the poor man seems to mix her up with it. I hope the mystery will be cleared up soon.’

‘I trust so; for I feel with Miss Rachel that the servant had nothing to do with it; yet there seems no one else to suspect.’

Days and weeks passed, and the assizes were coming on, but nothing more had been discovered. Mr. Erle was slowly recovering from his sudden illness, and the first sign he showed of convalescence was in the anxiety he displayed as to the counsel employed to defend Sarah Allen. None of Mr. Newstead’s friends having come forward, it was concluded that he had no relations in England; and the sad story was carefully concealed from Colonel Clargis by his sister, his state being still too precarious to bear any sudden shock. Under these circumstances, the whole onus of the trial seemed to devolve upon Julian Erle, who, though still ill and weak, was restlessly eager and excited, sparing neither trouble nor money to procure for his servant the best possible legal assistance.

He still professed himself incredulous as to the case being one of murder, suicide seemed so much more probable, and he doubted the possibility of the contrary being positively ascertained. He sent Mrs. Sims over to Lewes with encouraging messages to the poor girl, assuring her that as soon as her trial came on she must necessarily be acquitted.

The 25th of April arrived at last, and great excitement was shown by all the neighbourhood, and eagerness to be present at the trial. The assizes were held at Lewes, and Dr. Cartwright, at Rachel’s earnest request, had some time previously engaged rooms for her and her brother at the inn. He had secured seats for them also, near the judge; and Rachel, who had never been present at a trial, was rather impressed by the silence and solemnity which pervaded the court, though the crowd was immense. The appearance of the judge, the lawyers in their black robes, and the order and decorum with which everything was

done, gave her a sense of reality that startled her ; and her heart beat fast when she remembered that on the decision of these men a fellow-creature's life was trembling in the balance. A few minor cases were disposed of, and then 'the prisoner Sarah Allen' was called, 'charged with the wilful murder of Francis Newstead.'

As she was placed in the dock, she looked round at the crowd of faces that surrounded her with a helpless, appealing expression on her face, that touched every heart.

She was asked whether she pleaded 'guilty' or 'not guilty' to the charge.

Her 'not guilty' was uttered in so low a voice as to be only audible to those near her, and a momentary expression of surprise passed over her face, as if it were a strange question.

The jury were sworn, and the counsel for the prosecution stated the facts of the case, dwelling much upon the probability of the prisoner's guilt from the fact that there was no one in the house but herself and Mr. Erle at the time ; and Mr. Erle, as the jury well knew, was crippled, helpless, and bed-ridden.

This speech failed in convincing many of the girl's guilt, though it made Rachel feel very hopeless.

Mrs. Sims was the first witness. She testified to the arrival of Mr. Newstead, to visit her master, of his coming the next day to sleep, of his non-appearance in the morning, and of her finding him dead in his bed with his throat cut.

The prisoner's lawyer declined to ask any question at that time, and Mr. Erle was now carried into the court. He looked more ill and ghastly than ever, as he was laid upon a kind of sofa, which had been brought in expressly for him. He appeared to be absorbed in thought, and scarcely lifted his eyes from some paper which he was reading.

Mr. Wade stated that he was a surgeon at Luscombe, and had been summoned to see the dead body of a gentleman at the house of Mr. Erle, and gave medical evidence to prove that the wounds in the throat must have produced instant death.

The large dinner-knife found upon the bed was now produced, and laid on the table.

Mrs. Sims was recalled, and asked if she could identify the knife.

'Yes ; it was one of Mr. Erle's large dinner-knives.'

'Were they in your charge ?'

'No ; I was not a regular servant there.'

'Who had the care of them ?'

'The housemaid Sarah Allen, while the cook was away ; but—'

‘Only answer the questions put to you, my good woman, if you please,’ said the crown lawyer sharply. ‘Was this knife commonly used at dinner?’

Mrs. Sims supposed it was, ‘along with the rest.’

‘Had Mr. Newstead used it at dinner, the previous day?’

‘He had had no dinner there, only drank tea in Mr. Erle’s bedroom.’

‘Had she noticed anything peculiar in Mr. Newstead’s manner?’

‘No. She thought him a most pleasant, civil gentleman.’

Mrs. Sims was dismissed, and Mr. Erle’s sofa was moved forward. His testimony coincided exactly with that of Mrs. Sims, with the additional statement that from his previous knowledge of Mr. Newstead, he at once concluded the case to be one of suicide.

Dr. Cartwright was appealed to, as to the possibility of this being the case.

He stated that he had not seen the body as soon as Mr. Wade; in fact, not till the next day, but in his opinion it was not possible.

The prisoner’s counsel here came forward, and said he wished to bring some witnesses to the good character of the prisoner, but he would first ask for Mr. Erle’s testimony.

Mr. Erle spoke warmly in her favour, and said that Mrs. Erle had received a very good character with her, and that it had been fully borne out by the girl’s conduct.

Some witnesses from the village in which Sarah Allen lived were brought forward, and all spoke of her in high terms.

When Dr. Cartwright left the witness-box, he came and sat by Rachel, who had been listening with pale and breathless anxiety for his reply, as soon as Mr. Erle had suggested the probability of suicide.

‘I am thankful you are come,’ she said; ‘but O, Dr. Cartwright, why could you not say that *perhaps* the poor man killed himself?’

‘Because he didn’t, and he couldn’t,’ said the old man emphatically, ‘nor do I believe that poor girl had any hand in it.’

During Rachel’s conversation with Dr. Cartwright, Mr. Erle had been examined, but nothing farther was elicited, and the tide of feeling seemed turning against Sarah Allen, when a slip of paper was passed to her lawyer, who read it attentively. Mrs. Sims was then recalled, and asked if she had not something further to say about the knife, when the crown lawyer had stopped her.

‘Yes; she was going to say that Sarah had forgotten to bring the knife down that day, and that she had spoken to her about it.’

‘Where was the knife taken to?’

‘Upstairs, with Mr. Erle’s dinner. He dined early.’

‘Do you remember the knife particularly?’

‘No; it was one of the large dinner-knives generally used. She had entirely forgotten to state this at the inquest. In fact, she had been so terrified that she had not remembered it for many days after.’

This created a considerable sensation in the court.

‘I believe we shall find the clue to the mystery at last,’ said the counsel in a tone of satisfaction.

‘Now, Mr. Erle,’ he said abruptly, ‘will you tell me what time in the night of the nineteenth of March you went to Mr. Newstead’s bedroom?’

Julian Erle started visibly, and his pale face grew more livid in its paleness, as he replied that he was unable to leave his bed.

‘That you did leave it there is sufficient evidence to show, Mr. Erle. It is for your own interest to state the time. You probably recognise this pencil-case?’

But Mr. Erle could recognise nothing, having fainted away. He was carried out, and the counsel continued—

‘I believe, my lord,’ he said, addressing the judge, ‘that the solution of this mystery will be found in a very different quarter to what we expected. This pencil-case with Mr. Erle’s crest and cipher was found on the morning of the 20th of March, at Mr. Newstead’s bedroom door. It was picked up by the prisoner, laid aside, and in the distress and confusion of the day entirely forgotten. She accidentally mentioned it to me, and I at once desired Mrs. Sims to let me see the room where she said it had been left. It was on the mantelpiece in the breakfast-room, and I not only found it, but found it stained with blood.’

He then proceeded to state, that though the prisoner did not appear to attach any importance to the discovery, he had kept it carefully in his own possession, and purposely not produced it till that moment. He believed that, when coupled with a strange noise the prisoner had heard in the night,—which she had described as a sort of scuffling, as of some one crawling along the floor, and which he had at first supposed, as she did, might have been the dog, but which proceeded from a very different source,—the detention of the knife upstairs, and the finding of the pencil-case at Mr. Newstead’s door, it would, as he had be-

fore said, direct suspicion to a very different quarter. He would wait for Mr. Erle's reappearance to confirm the truth of his words.

Mr. Erle's reappearance was, however, in a few minutes pronounced to be impossible ; but Dr. Cartwright, who made this statement, produced a paper which he believed contained a complete justification of the prisoner, and a confession of his own guilt. It had been drawn up previously, with a full determination to use it if Sarah Allen should be convicted of the murder.

The paper began by stating, that from the moment that Francis Newstead blighted his early life by causing his expulsion from Bridge End, he had taken a solemn vow that if they ever met again, his life should pay the forfeit. Though so many years had elapsed, and his keen sense of the injury done him was blunted, still, having once made the vow, he considered it was registered in Heaven, and that he was bound to keep it ; and when Francis Newstead appeared so unexpectedly at his house, he believed him to have been sent by Providence solely for that purpose. It was a kind of revelation to him that he must keep his vow ; and though he deeply regretted the necessity, he believed that it would be a crime not to fulfil it. He had great difficulty in doing so, from his helpless state, but had contrived to crawl upon his hands and knees from his own room to that of his guest, holding the knife, which he had secreted, closely between his teeth. His greatest obstacle was in opening the door, but when once that was done, he easily managed to drag himself up by the bedpost. Francis Newstead was always a sound sleeper, and he was able to approach him to commit the dreadful act—or, as he expressed it, 'to fulfil his vow'—without waking him. He regretted the necessity that had been laid upon him, but as it had to be done, it was a relief when it was over. He had never contemplated that the case would not be considered one of suicide, and was greatly distressed when he found that suspicion had fallen upon Sarah Allen, and prepared this statement at once, fully determined to use it if at her trial she was not acquitted.

Nothing could exceed the astonishment and breathless attention with which this was heard by all present. To those who had been on terms of intimacy with the murderer it came as such a sudden shock, that the poor girl's innocence was little regarded, except by Rachel Westmacott. With her it had its full effect; and she felt as if some impending calamity to herself had been averted, and the horror which was felt by most of those present

was scarcely shared by her in her genuine sympathy for Sarah Allen. She had felt so sure of the girl's innocence, that now it was proved, she could not help crying quietly in the fulness of her joy and relief. At present she had neither horror nor compassion to bestow upon Julian Erle.

Dr. Cartwright had shown various signs of agitation during the trial, and was now called away to give his assistance to Mr. Erle, who had been carried to the inn in strong convulsions. He found him lying in a state of complete insensibility. Under these circumstances his reappearance was impossible, and Dr. Cartwright was required to give a medical certificate to that effect. He did so, and the jury immediately gave a full and complete acquittal to the prisoner, and brought in a verdict of 'wilful murder' against Julian Erle.

It was late in the afternoon before Rachel and Lewis found themselves again sitting quietly in the dingy parlour of the inn at Lewes. They were anxiously expecting Dr. Cartwright to join them, but he did not come to dinner; and the evening passed, and the excitement of the day seemed to have subsided into unusual stagnation, when at eleven o'clock he appeared, looking so worn and harassed that Rachel felt sure something dreadful must have happened.

'Something is the matter, Dr. Cartwright,' said Rachel quickly; 'won't you tell us what it is?'

'Indeed, I think it is the greatest possible mercy,' he said, as he seated himself with a weary look; 'but it has been a terrible sight to witness that poor man's sufferings and his wife's agony—Julian Erle is dead.'

'Dead!' exclaimed Rachel and Lewis, in different tones of astonishment and horror.

'Yes; and I can only be thankful that he is spared what was before him. If he had recovered, it would probably have been to a state of imbecility. His brain was doubtless affected by the repetition of those attacks. The statement he drew up was not the production of a sane mind: he was at that very time a monomaniac, labouring under the delusion that he was obliged to commit the murder for which, if his insanity could not have been proved, he must have suffered the penalty of the law. Thank God he is saved from that, and his wife and children from such a fearful memory! In either case one can only be relieved by this termination to such an awful tragedy.'

'Perhaps—certainly if he had lived to repent,' said Rachel, shuddering.

'If he had lived, it would have made no difference. His mind was in too diseased a state for him to take a just view of his crime. It is a most curious case of monomania, for he was an excellent husband and father—a man of bad temper, but with strong affections. These things are very strange and inexplicable. But I am keeping you up, Miss Rachel, and after such a day as this you ought to be in bed and asleep.'

'Do send her to bed, Dr. Cartwright,' said Lewis; 'she will be knocked up to-morrow, and nothing would induce her to go till you came in; and we promised uncle Henry to be at home early.'

'Good-night, my dear young lady,' said the old man kindly. 'I shall see you in the morning; I want to introduce you to a friend of mine.'

Rachel awoke the next morning with a sense of relief that she was leaving a place so associated in her mind with all that was terrible. She was sitting by the window after breakfast, waiting for her brother, when she saw Dr. Cartwright with two women, an old one and a young one, coming up the street.

'May we come in?' he said, looking up at the window, as he passed.

Rachel nodded assent, and in another moment she heard his foot on the stairs, and went forward to meet him.

'Who are your friends, Dr. Cartwright?' she said in a low voice. 'I know no one here.'

'Yes, I think you do—one of them at least.'

Rachel looked up in surprise as the two women came in, and immediately recognised in the younger the face that she had seen in the dock yesterday, and watched with such intense interest.

'I am very glad to see you—very glad to see you here,' she said warmly, and taking Sarah Allen's hand.

'Thank you, miss,' said the poor girl; but her lip quivered as she spoke, and she seemed nervous and trembling, and tears stood in her eyes.

'We have come to thank you, miss,' said the old woman; 'but Sarah's still too dazed to be able to say anything.'

'To thank me?' said Rachel, with unfeigned astonishment. 'I have never done anything for her. I only wish I were able.'

'That's just it, young lady—you felt for us. I saw your face in that terrible place yesterday, and the doctor with you, and then he said you was a friend of his. The heart that's ready to

feel is quite as precious to those in trouble as the hand that's ready to give. No doubt but you have both.'

Rachel was silent from emotion ; indeed she was too much surprised to be able to speak. The girl suddenly seized her hand and kissed it, and in another moment they were gone.

'O, they are grateful people !' said Dr. Cartwright, rubbing his hands. 'I thought you should see them.'

'Grateful for what?' exclaimed Rachel, greatly distressed. 'O, Dr. Cartwright ! now they are gone, and I could not speak. I had no time even to offer them anything—what must they think of me !'

'You know,' he returned smiling, 'that "the heart that's ready to feel is as good as the hand that's ready to give," and that you have both.'

Rachel looked at him reproachfully.

'I am quite in earnest, I assure you. I have lived too long not to appreciate such gifts at their full value.'

Lewis's voice was heard from below :

'Rachel, the carriage is here—are you ready ?'

She did not reply, and he came up.

'O, Dr. Cartwright, I did not know you were here ! Can we take you back with us ?'

'No, thank you—there is a great deal to be arranged here for poor Mrs. Erle, and I have promised to stay and help her.'

Rachel's heart was too full for words. She wrung the old man's hand and turned away. The tremendous realities of Life and Death had been brought so vividly before her in the last twenty-four hours, that she could not shake off the impression. Indeed, it was never effaced ; for though her life was a strange and chequered one, this adventure of her girlhood and its subsequent tragedy were never forgotten.

THE LIGHTS ON GWYNETH'S HEAD.

CHAPTER I. A NORTHERN COAST.

THE tide was out, and the air that blew over the long stretch of yellow sand was very fresh, and gentle, too, for March, which month does not always come in like a lion, but sometimes inverts the proverb. There was a boat high and dry on the beach ; there was something that looked like fishing-nets ; and there were two or three figures dotted about the sands.

All this Lucy Fernham saw from the drawing-room windows of the big, irregularly-built house which stood in its own grounds, nearly a quarter of a mile inland, and which belonged to Sir Trevor Pole, master of the Redfield pack. There were a good many guests assembled in that drawing-room, and of these Lucy knew that she was the star and centre. She would have told you so very bitterly. She remembered, only twelve months ago, looking out of a cottage window on a wilder coast than this, and being superciliously questioned respecting the road by one of these very gentlemen who paid court to her so deferentially now. Neither, as a queen, did she always spare her subjects.

'You must remember, my lord,' she would say to Lord Charles Fairstairs, 'just such a coast-line as that, with the bits of white flecking it, down at Gwyneth's Head, you know, where you lost your way.'

And my lord would fidget and stammer, and mutter internally 'the deuce !' and outwardly twist the thing into the most winning of compliments. For Lucy was an heiress. I don't think she was any happier for that. Sometimes the fact seemed to have got into her life and poisoned it. It was always before her. She read it even in the invitation of Sir Trevor and Lady Pole, for had they not a son ? And was not Sir Trevor notoriously half ruined by the fox-hounds ? She read it in the group

of gentlemen that always gathered round her ; in the deference which poor quiet Lady Pole showed to her ; and she saw it, plainer than ever, in the tall figure of her uncle, Mr. Geoffrey Fernham, as he came through the folding doors of the inner drawing-room, smiling when he caught her eye.

He was a wonderful old gentleman ; straight as a dart, his hair quite white, his manners perfect, and his wealth fabulous. This was the accepted version of him. No one knew exactly where he had originally sprung from, or, indeed, much about him. Venturous theorists affirmed that his money was the result of mercantile speculations ; others, that it had descended to him in the form of large estates in North America. But, at any rate, it doesn't so much matter where money comes from, if it is an existing fact ; and Geoffrey Fernham's social status was unquestioned. He went everywhere ; was rather deferred to than patronised ; and if, through age and unconfessed infirmity, his popularity had at all threatened to decrease, he had recently sent it up above its former level by adopting his niece, and causing it to be understood that she was his sole heiress.

As he came through the folding doors this evening he saw Lucy, as usual, like a queen holding a little court, and rather tired of it, just glancing towards him as he made his way with his accustomed quiet grace to a prie-dieu near her. For this extraordinary old man never lounged, or if at any time he did, no one ever saw him do it.

They were talking about the Redfield hounds, and the next day's meet at the Cross Roads, which was to be the last meet of the season.

' Ah ! ' said Mr. Fernham, ' that's a place where they would have buried a suicide some years ago—for punishment, I suppose. Isn't it odd ? '

Nobody liked the interruption ; unless, perhaps, it was Lucy herself ; but young Trevor Pole, out of politeness, asked, ' What is odd, Mr. Fernham ? '

' The prejudice that existed—and still exists—against suicide. Death is generally a painful word,' said Mr. Fernham carelessly, as though to him all words were alike ; ' but of all deaths the one called natural must be the most terrible. In your own hands the work would be instantaneous, and, properly managed, painless ; taking place at the very moment when life ceases to have anything to offer in return for the burden of living. There was rather a good story in *Blackwood* touching on this. It's a long time ago, and was only the story of a dream. A very sen-

sible dream, though. Suppose a man—take Sir Trevor here, for instance—has had his day, enjoyed all his good things in his time, and has now only to give up to his son, and sink into insignificance. Well, instead of dragging on the shadow of a life that was once good, suppose he ceases to be. There is no necessity to use hard words. He might simply *cease to be*. No one need inquire about him. He *was*; his son is. There is great simplicity in the theory.'

Mr. Fernham looked up as he finished, saw the discomfort and perplexity on the faces around him, and his own lost its dreamy, abstracted expression.

'But you were speaking of the meet,' he said. 'It will be a splendid day for it. You can see that the sun will set without a cloud, and the wind is as it should be. Lucy, will you ride?'

'To see them throw off,' replied Miss Fernham.

There was a chorus of exclamations at this from the gentlemen.

Mr. Fernham listened, and one white hand shaded his mouth. I think that the curl on Lucy's lip might have found its reflection there, only without bitterness. Bitterness involves, to a certain extent, suffering; and in Geoffrey Fernham's creed it was not worth while to exalt the little amusements of social life into channels for irritation.

'Perhaps Lucy is right,' said the old man. 'She doesn't care for leaping, and I do not. I was mad enough in my young days, but now—'

'There's not likely to be a leap worth the name in to-morrow's run,' interposed Trevor Pole junior. For which speech his guests and companion courtiers could have broken him upon the wheel; for why not, at least, make believe there were gallant things to be done?

'Unless they take the Mallet's Collar,' put in Sir Trevor.

'That reminds me,' said his son, 'I met Archer Denison prowling about the Mallet's Collar this morning. I asked him here, sir.'

A dead silence followed this speech. It was certain that Miss Fernham had looked up with a sudden change of countenance at the name young Pole uttered; but that might have been mere accident. Anyhow, there ran through the courtiers an instinctive feeling of jealousy and dislike to the new comer. Each one of them flattered himself that he was getting on so well with the heiress, and here was, at least, a possible rival. Had she known him before? What made her turn so pale when his name was

mentioned? The evening had grown dull, and couldn't recover itself. Lord Charles was consigning Mr. Denison to a broken neck over the Mallet's Collar; Sir Harry Dedham anathematised him as a pushing bore; and little Brandt—so called because he measured some six feet three—apostrophised him as a conceited jackass.

Lord Charles Fairstairs smoked a good deal that night, enveloped in a wonderful suit of green velvet, slightly dimmed; but he only asked one question, viz. 'Can he ride?'

To which Mr. Trevor Pole, as soon as he understood the pronoun, replied most satisfactorily, 'Who? Archer Denison? Not he. At least, I should say not. He's a capital fellow, and all that, but he's had a different training from ours. He's going in for an R.A., you know.'

Altogether, I would not have given much for Archer Denison's chance, if his day's enjoyment had at all depended upon the new acquaintances to whom he was about to be introduced; but it did not. Sir Trevor Pole, standing at the breakfast-room window with a dog-whip in his hand the next morning, saw his new visitor sauntering about on the lawn with the two Fernhams, and he threw up the window in a temper.

'Why can't they mount?' he said to his son, who leaned against the window with a cigar in his mouth. 'And why haven't you made the most of your chances there, Trevor? I can tell you I am hard enough pressed; and Lucy Fernham is worth winning, by all accounts, instead of leaving her to those dandies, and now bringing down this Denison to add to the number.'

'And cut them all out,' added young Pole through his teeth.

'I must give up the hounds,' said the baronet.

'I shall be sorry for that.'

'Lucy Fernham sings with you, rides with you, flirts—'

Trevor broke into a laugh, and puffed out a cloud of smoke. Now the baronet couldn't smoke himself, and hated tobacco, so he drew back a little, and said, peevishly, 'But if you addle your brains with a detestable narcotic the first thing in the morning, no wonder others get before you.'

Trevor straightened himself and flung away his half-finished cigar.

'Lucy Fernham doesn't flirt, sir; that's a mistake. She condescends to let a fellow weary her. I believe Denison is an old acquaintance—knew her when she was poor, and that sort of thing. It doesn't matter whom she marries, however, since it certainly won't be me.'

'Yet you might have a chance, if we join forces for Italy, which we are sure to do. I shall go to economise.'

'So does Mr. Fernham,' said Trevor, with a laugh.

The baronet laughed too.

'See that our economy isn't after his fashion, that's all. I can't afford it. Here comes Gladiator; you take care of him, Trevor; he's too good for you.'

'I'll take care,' replied Trevor, nodding to the compliment.

Once fairly on the road, Mr. Denison fell back from his place at Lucy's side, and kept behind. He knew that he had been a good rider years ago; but he knew also that Miss Fernham had no idea whether he was or not, and he watched her rather curiously. At first she rode on indifferently enough; but at a point which brought the Cross Roads in sight she just turned her head and gave one glance at his general appearance.

'I'd give something to know what she thinks of it,' said Mr. Denison to himself. 'Not that it matters to me, though.'

And there were the hounds dotted about amongst the yellow gorse, and the horsemen lighting it up with bits of vivid scarlet, which it is the fashion to call pink—and on the horizon to the right the long low coast-line of dull red sand; and in front the purple moor.

'It's worth coming to see,' said Sir Trevor. 'Take my advice, Miss Fernham, and follow the hunt. It won't take you into any mischief to-day.'

Somebody interrupted him to ask a question about the earth-stoppers; and when he turned round again Lucy was in front with her uncle and Archer Denison.

'I thought Trevor said he couldn't ride,' muttered the baronet. 'He shouldn't have had the bay if I had known.'

But whatever Lucy meant to do, Mr. Denison had no intention of being in at the death. At the first check he found himself still close to the Fernhams, and looking on while some dozen horsemen craned their necks over a fence in front. One by one they reached the weakest point, looked, and rode on. Mr. Denison saw Lucy watching them with a gleam of expectation that faded into something like actual sadness as each one turned away.

'I'll do this one leap,' he thought; 'and then go home.'

'Use the snaffle,' said Mr. Fernham, who was looking at him; 'not the curb. The old bay is plucky, but I've ridden her and know her tricks. She'll swerve at the whip, and answer to the spur.'

Archer nodded and took the leap. After this the hunt saw no more of him. He turned the plucky old bay, much against the equine will, and rode slowly home. He got his sketch-book, and wandered off along the shore and over the rocks, till the sun began to sink, and the sound of the sea to get fainter as it crept away. He was thinking of many things: of his profession and its greatness; of the hollowness of the world and the poor pitiful dreams which, after all, only mock us with their false colouring. And on turning suddenly round a sharp rock, he found himself placed face to face with Lucy Fernham, and stopped.

At first they stood looking at each other without a word; then something came over Archer Denison which he could not control; a sort of brief madness, it seemed to him afterwards, and he put out his hand and said softly, 'Lucy!'

She just looked at him, and sat down on a big boulder, covering her face.

'Don't, Archer! It's like the sound of the sea on Gwyneth's Head. O, how I wish I was back again!'

'Back again where, Lucy?'

'In the dear old cottage with my aunt—my duenna, as you used to call her, you naughty boy! But I forgot,' said Lucy, getting up with a forlorn resumption of her dignity, 'I am Miss Fernham, and you are Mr. Denison. Richard isn't himself any more. I feel like the little girl in *Punch*, Archer. The world is hollow, and my doll stuffed with sawdust; so, if you please, I'd like to be a nun.'

Archer might have laughed at the plaintiveness of the poor little unthroned queen; but he saw Mr. Fernham at a little distance; and so he said, hastily, 'Lucy, you called me a naughty boy, just now. Think me a boy, if you will; your brother, for instance. I want to know if you are aware what you are doing; if you understand all these devoted slaves of yours?'

'I understand that they want my money,' said Lucy, simply.

'And since they cannot all have it, may an old friend ask which is the favoured one?'

Lucy was silent a little, and then she said—

'I am very miserable, Archer.'

'Why?'

'Because I have learned to doubt. If any one is kind to me, I think at once it is money. It's very shocking, I know, but I can't help it. I cannot believe in any one. Now what do you think of me? I am worldly, of course, and you give me up. This is another thing the hateful money has done for me.'

'Lucy,' said Archer, 'when you and I picked mosses in the Kentish woods last May, you were as poor as I was.'

'Well.'

'Well. Things are changed. I do not give you up: it is the other way. I am poor. Are you quite certain that this universal doubt of yours would never, in any case, touch me?'

The painful red came up into Lucy's face.

'I—I am sure of nothing, I believe. How can I be sure?'

'Good-bye!' said Archer.

'Not yet. Not in that way, Archer! Consider; my lesson has been *Non è vero* so long, and I have learnt it so well!'

'Good-bye!' repeated Archer.

'At least we are friends?'

Archer could not answer, for Mr. Fernham had come up; and shaking off a rather odd, foreign-looking individual with a polite '*Poste restante*, Napoli, for the next fortnight; afterwards Rome,' and speaking a few matter-of-fact words to the artist, he walked off with his niece.

At the drive-gate he paused.

'You have known this Mr. Denison before, Lucy?'

'Yes.'

'But then he is poor.'

'He is—'

A half-smile upon her uncle's lip checked her.

'Never mind,' said Mr. Fernham; 'he is a phoenix, no doubt. But, Lucy, I did not bring you away from Gwyneth's Head to give you to a struggling artist.'

It was on Lucy's lips to say, 'I wish you had left me there,' but she refrained.

'Listen to me,' proceeded Mr. Fernham. 'I have put you in a position to choose for yourself. Choose well, if possible; at any rate choose. I want to see you married before I—die.'

The word came with difficulty: it was hateful to him: it embodied the sublime climax of that suffering from which all his life he had sought to escape.

'However,' he finished, 'we will talk no more of it now. See, there are the lights springing up. Let us go in.'

Archer Denison, glancing towards Lucy that night, went off into a fit of abstract contemplation of the girl who had sat on a big boulder only a few hours ago, and covered her face. It was altogether different now; she was holding her court; far away above him; bestowing her favours with tolerable equality upon Lord Charles, Sir Harry, and Colonel Brandt; Trevor Pole

looking darkly on. For Mr. Denison she had not a word; and he could not know that she would go to her room with a sore heart when it was all over, to look out towards the sea creeping back again, and cry for the days that were dead.

CHAPTER II. BY LAGO D'AGNANO.

'LET us go into the country somewhere, uncle. This is too like the Lady's Mile; only for the flowers.'

Mr. Fernham had taken rooms on a breezy *primo piano*, professing always to economise, and keeping the joke up with immense enjoyment. He had escorted the untravelled English girl amongst the lions with praiseworthy industry; amply repaid, as he told her, by the sight of her fresh enjoyment. They had been through Castellamare to Sorrento and 'done' Tasso's house; they had walked the paved streets of Pompeii, heard all about the skeleton of the priest before his altar, with the sacrificial knife still in the bony fingers—seen the fountains in mosaic; the temples and the great amphitheatre, which young Trevor Pole said made him wonder if his horse Gladiator was being properly attended to. They had submitted to be half-choked with sulphurous clouds at the top of Vesuvius, and had inspected the 'Devil's kitchen.' For Lucy's sake Mr. Fernham had even mounted again the hundreds of steps to St. Elmo and San Martino—and now he was riding, rather wearily, if the truth must be told, beside her in the Villa Reale, watching the carriages creep on, three abreast, and the exaggerated 'swelldom' of the exquisites who rode at a snail's pace beside them. And with the Fernhams there was the Redfield party over again; the English milord Charles, the little soldier, and the baronet. No one knew why they had all fancied Naples at this peculiar time; each of them agreed that it was 'odd;' and each of them sneered at the others for persevering idiots who had no chance.

'I'll tell you where we'll go,' said Mr. Fernham, suddenly. 'Lucy, we'll drive to-morrow to—'

Lucy, bringing her sunny head so close that it almost touched his white one, whispered, 'Hush! I don't want these men. We'll go alone; you and I.'

And they went alone, along the coast to Baiæ, Pozzuoli, and the smoking Solfatara; till Mr. Fernham, suddenly putting his hand into his breast-pocket, said, 'My dear, I forgot; here

is a letter for you. You shall read it here, by the little Lake d'Agnano—it's pretty, is it not?—and I'll go away while you enjoy it. I wanted to see this place once again: to say good-bye to it,' he added, looking at her with an odd mixture of melancholy and jest. 'Lucy, I have hated suffering all my life; but I did suffer here once, and up there among the trees there is a memento of it.'

At another time Lucy might have puzzled herself a little over this speech; but she held her letter in her hand, and knew that the writing was Archer Denison's. While she read it; while two tears gathered in her eyes, but never fell; while the beautiful little lake was blurred, and its emerald setting a dismal mass, Lucy went back a year of her life, blotting out the interval with that passionate despair which is so vain and so intolerable. Archer had sent her only a few foolish verses, but they sounded to her like a farewell for ever. Moreover, they came from Gwyneth's Head; and she knew that he must have seen the letter which she had written to her aunt in the first flush of her pleasure in the scenes which already were beginning to weary her. Angry that he should have seen this; angry with him, with herself, with everybody, she read the lines again, thinking that she would tear them up into small bits, and fling them into the lake:

'So orange and myrtle are fair for you,
And your northern eye can gaze
On a wave half dark with shimmering blue,
Half steeped in a golden haze.
And your cup is filled to the brim, you say,—
Filled with life's sweetest wine;
Thus I take from your hand, so far away,
A sting you cannot divine.
For your sunlit wave creeps chilly and slow,
To break on a northern shore;
I would it had parted us long ago
For ever and evermore.

Your dreams are amongst the clustering vine
That fringes some southern bay;
Shall I tell you now what I see in mine
As I read your words to-day?
The shadows that fall from a feathery tree,
On a Kentish lawn to play,
That are touching your cheek so tenderly
With the softest kiss of May.
But when I see it, dull grows my pen,
And weary my heart, and sore;

And I wish the wave had parted us then
For ever and evermore.

Your hair is touched with the glimmering gold
As the shadows come and go ;
Like memory's light on a story told
In the twilight long ago.
From the dear, dear life that was all a dream
I turn to your words again ;
And my heart, where sweet lay the golden gleam,
Grows chill with a sudden pain.
For the wave is between us now, you say,
Since the fair May-dream is o'er ;
I would it had swept us apart that day
For ever and evermore.'

'Well, Lucy, you have been long enough over it. I hope it's a proposal.'

Lucy folded her paper with wonderful calmness, considering that a moment before she had meant to tear it up and throw it into the lake.

'No, uncle.'

A shadow passed over Geoffrey Fernham's face. There were few of his acquaintances and enviers who would not have started back aghast from the thoughts and speculations which had occupied him during that solitary stroll. It was not his habit, however, to indulge in unpleasant reflections ; so he shook them off, and said good-humouredly, 'Lucy, I wish you would make up your mind. Here are four suitors at your feet ; honourable, true men, holding good positions. They may not be very clever, but what of that ? They are average. I was considered above that, and what has my cleverness done for me ? I shall go out of the world without the regret of a single soul. Mind, I am not mourning over this. My object has been to enjoy to the very full all that life could offer, and I have done so. The question is not concerning me, however, but you. These gentlemen are all in love with you, Lucy.'

'With your heiress, sir,' said Lucy, involuntarily.

Mr. Fernham smiled—a very odd smile, that somehow seemed to give a ghastly look to his face.

'At any rate they are my friends. They are going on with me to Rome. I should like you to be civil to them.'

'I will be civil to them.'

'I wish you would like Lord Charles. He's a very good sort of fellow. Try, Lucy. Hitherto you have done nothing

but queen it, but that cannot go on. I have motives for wishing to see you settled. Give Lord Charles a chance, my dear.'

Lucy did not answer, but she crushed Archer Denison's envelope into her pocket rather savagely. Yes, she would be civil to her uncle's friends. After all, he had some right to complain of her. She would forget all about her past life, and the little cottage at Gwyneth's Head; and as to Archer, it was worse than childish to wear a sore heart for a man who openly declared that he wished they had never met.

So Lucy tutored herself into subjection, and tried to like Lord Charles. He was good-natured and attentive; she could not help seeing that her will was law to him. She wanted to get to Rome in time for the Easter splendour, and he managed this for her. He even went with her to hear the music in the Sistine Chapel, and the first Miserere in St. Peter's, though he hated music, and couldn't see the use of being made miserable by such melancholy sounds; and on Easter-day he, constitutionally an indolent man, submitted to stand from eight o'clock till twelve, in St. Peter's, to hear the Pope celebrate High Mass. Lucy might have seen the hopeless weariness in his face, if she had thought of him, but she did not. From the blast of silver clarions which heralded the Pope's entrance, to the moment when the papal troops drew up in the Piazza outside, under the balcony from which the benediction was to be pronounced, she had forgotten all about her companions.

As for my lord, he never spoke to her; the dead silence of so dense a throng had something awful about it to him; and when the cannon sounded from the Castle of St. Angelo, and the seventy or eighty thousand kneeling figures rose up after the Pope's blessing, he, stolid Englishman as he was, almost joined in the huzzas that followed, so great was his relief that the thing was over. It was at this moment that Lucy, starting from him, uttered a sudden cry:

'Archer, Archer,—I am so glad!'

She checked herself at once; but Lord Charles had heard, had recognised that 'snob' of an artist, and seen his face light up.

'Are you glad?' said Archer. 'So am I then. It's a strange place to meet in, is it not?'

He was holding her hand still, and Lucy, hardly knowing what to do, turned with a slight gesture of introduction to Lord Charles.

'How de do, Mr.—ah—Densil?' said his lordship. 'Im—

pressive sight, I suppose. Can't say I care very much for it myself. Stage-trickery rather.'

'You will call, Archer,' broke in Lucy hastily. 'We are on the Piazza di Spagna, and—'

'Thank you; but I'm afraid I must be a very unsocial animal just now. I am going to shut myself up, and work hard; harder than such happy fellows as you, my lord, know anything about.'

Lucy swallowed the little sting of pain, anger, and self-contempt as best she could.

'Well,' she said, indifferently, 'I daresay you are right. Good-bye.'

'Good-bye.'

My lord, walking sulkily by Lucy's side, made a solemn resolution that before the day was over he would have his answer, let it be what it might. Months afterwards he used to reflect what a lucky chance it was for him that Miss Fernham turned restive on the score of propriety, and insisted on dragging poor meek Lady Pole with her to the evening illumination of St. Peter's.

Mr. Fernham had been out all day, no one knew where. He came in before they started, and went straight up to his niece, drawing her on one side.

'Settle it with my lord to-night, Lucy.'

He spoke in such a strange tone that she looked up at him, and started at the dead whiteness of his face.

'You are ill,' she said. 'I will not go out.'

He laughed.

'I never was ill in my life. Don't you take fancies, Lucy, but go, and come back to me,—that is, come back to-night Lady Charles Fairstairs elect.'

But Lucy was both tired and excited, and in no mood to take any notice of my lord's efforts to draw her into a confidential dialogue. There was, or she thought there was, something oppressive in the air; and she will never again think of that broad temple of fire against the starless sky without the shudder of a nameless terror creeping over her. She was haunted all the time by the strange white face that had looked down at her and laughed; and she was glad when Lady Pole confessed to being tired, and they turned homewards.

Lucy did not know what she was afraid of; but she was afraid. When she had said good-night to Lady Pole, and seen her walk away with my lord, she stopped a moment to still the

unusual beating of her heart, and to tell herself that it was the heat, and the fatigue, and excitement of the day. Then she went into her own room to take off her bonnet; and from thence to the drawing-room. No one was there. A small pan of coals smouldered on a tripod on one table; for Mr. Fernham was chilly in spite of the warm weather. A taper still burnt on a smaller table; and there was a smell of sealing-wax in the room. Going up to this latter table she saw a neat pile of papers tied together and labelled; and near them a note addressed to herself, in her uncle's hand.

Still fighting off that strange terror of she knew not what, Lucy broke this open, and read it.

'MY DEAR LUCY,—I have been a consistent man all my life. When I took you from your aunt, I promised to leave you all I had. So I do; and it is—nothing.

'There is only enough to pay my debts. I have had money, and have used it—to purchase every good thing which the world could sell. I saw you when my popularity was a little failing; and I adopted you, as the phrase is, for three reasons. I should thereby regain importance, experience a novel sensation, and make a good match for my niece. If I have not done this last, it has been your fault, not mine. And my money is gone. I thought it would have lasted longer, but it is gone. I have always determined that when life could no more give me the full measure to which I am accustomed, I would know no meaner portion. I would *cease to be*. If you have neglected your chances with Lord Charles, and wilfully thrown him over, I cannot help it. I have still done you no harm. And in that case go back to your mother's sister; you are no worse off than the girl whom I took away and to whom I have given at least one brilliant year in her life. Good-bye. I am about to lock myself into my room. You need take no steps. I have borne about with me for years the means of a death, painless—even luxurious—and certain.

'Your uncle, now—when you read this, no one!'

In the morning all Rome was talking about the Piazza di Spagna, and the English milord who was rich and yet not rich; who had destroyed himself. In a fortnight's time, before Lucy had recovered from the shock of the most terrible thing that had ever happened to her, there lay on her table three of the thinnest possible bits of pasteboard, with 'P. P. C.' scrawled at the bot-

tom of each. Out of the four faithful and devoted knights, only Trevor Pole had asked permission to see her, and offer her his clumsy sympathy and his good-bye in person. And day after day in sore bitterness and desolation there came up in Lucy's heart the thought that surely Archer Denison would write or come to her before she left Rome.

But Archer was at the Café Greco, absorbed in his studies; and if fragments of the nine days' wonder reached him, he caught no names and took no notice. When he did hear what had happened, it was too late.

CHAPTER III. WHERE THE WAVE BREAKS WILDEST.

ON Gwyneth's Head, cold, desolate, and beautiful; a dark mass with a granite face on its summit; the lines sharp cut; the stone lips compressed with a sort of strain upon them; the whole face bent forward in an attitude of watching. And the autumn wind was freshening; the waves lashing themselves up before it, dull yellow on the coast, green and olive-green farther out. Many a boat had been stove-in; many a fisherman had gone to his long home here, under the calm face that never changed and never rested from its watching. The old people who had lived in the little town before it grew into the quiet, aristocratic watering-place told the story of the granite-face with unquestioning faith. It was Gwyneth, a fisherman's wife, who had gone out to watch through the stormy night for her husband's boat, and had never come back again, but watched there for ever, turned to stone by the sight of the broken boat on the rocks below.

In these later days a little lantern-shaped turret stood on Gwyneth's Head; and when the warning lights shone out at night, the lowest of them just touched the stone face here and there, like the white lights of a painter.

They were lighted now, though it was daylight, and they could do but little good. And below the rock, close to the pier, a crowd had gathered—a silent crowd, almost immovable, except for the glasses that were passed from hand to hand and the occasional half-smothered exclamation. This crowd was watching the steamer from L—; and apart from it, on a seat sheltered a little by the cliff, there were two ladies watching also. The vessel had been at first only a dark speck upon the waves; but she was fighting her way nearer. The men on the pier said that she was nearer, certainly; that there was a chance for her. If she could

only make out the lights on Gwyneth's Head, and keep clear of the rocks, there was a chance for her ; but how she rolled and pitched ! and what madness to start in the teeth of such foul-weather signs !

'I am glad there's no one belonging to me in that vessel,' said the elder of the two ladies on the seat. 'Have you had enough of it, Lucy ?'

Lucy Fernham turned her eyes for one moment from the sea like some one in a dream.

'Do you want to go home, Aunt Rachel ?'

'Why,' said the old lady drily, 'it's not the very gentlest breeze in the world, my dear.'

At this juncture some one offered Lucy a glass, which she took eagerly.

'There seems to be a good many on board,' said the owner of this, steadying it for her. 'One may almost distinguish faces.'

So one may. Lucy, giving back the glass, said to her companion, quietly,

'There *is* some one belonging to you there. Let us stay, Aunt Rachel.'

The old lady looked at her niece and refrained from questioning. Lucy was odd—the result probably of that shock in Italy, from which she had never recovered.

As for Lucy, when the glass was once more offered to her she did not even see it. She saw nothing outwardly but the waves that leaped up on Gwyneth's Head, and fell back in spray into the boiling caldron beneath ; and mixed up with this, like a confused dream, there came the May-day in Kent ; the meeting on the sands at Redfield, when she sent him away ; the vast kneeling crowd in the Piazza outside St. Peter's, and a white-haired old man in a balcony uttering the Easter benediction. If she could but have had a small part of her life back again ! But now it was too late ; he would never know how true she had been in reality to her old faith in him ; and here, underneath the lights on Gwyneth's Head, was to be the end of all !

'Lucy, wake up ! There's no danger now.'

A great shout rose up from the hitherto silent crowd ; there was a swaying to and fro towards the wooden steps of the landing-stage ; a policeman or two to keep off the press ; and a few moments after that, a voice she had thought never to hear again was speaking to her, and a hand whose touch somehow brought back the Kentish lawn was holding her own.

They did not talk much. The wind howled after them, and

the roar and slush of the mad sea on the shingle would have drowned any voice of ordinary pitch. But Aunt Rachel was a discreet old lady ; once within the familiar room at the little cottage, she turned to Archer Denison, putting on her spectacles and looking him over as if he had been a natural curiosity, and said,

‘So you have been hunting everywhere for the runaway ! What simpletons, men are, to be sure ! As if the Poles, or any such people, would care about her now ! But, Archer, she isn’t satisfied with Gwyneth now. She wants to go gallivanting off as governess. It’s all a pretence, I know. She has had a taste of grand life, and wants more. But there, I’ll go away. See if you can make her hear reason.’

Archer Denison sat silent for a minute looking at the lights which he had once thought he never should reach.

‘Old Gwyneth gave me a rough welcome,’ he said. ‘You didn’t think I was in the boat, Lucy ?’

‘I didn’t think about it. I knew. Some one gave me a glass, and I saw you.’

‘Were you frightened ?’

She hesitated a little, and then said, ‘No.’

‘I don’t believe you ; I won’t. You know why I didn’t come to you in Rome ? You got my letter last week ?’

‘Yes, I had your letter.’

‘What is all this about governing ? You used to be happy enough with Aunt Rachel.’

‘That is no reason why I should be a burthen upon her. I am older now, and I am able—’

‘Yes, a valiant woman. Will you come and be a burthen upon me, Lucy ?’

Lucy answered, readily enough, ‘No, I will not.’

But he only laughed.

‘I am not afraid of you now. You were almost my promised wife before they made an heiress of you, and nearly spoilt a good man’s life—that’s mine, you know. But you cannot doubt me now ; there’s nothing to doubt about : no motive but the old one. I am not so very poor, Lucy, and am rich in hope. What do you say ?’

‘Well, have you settled it ?’ inquired the spectacles round the door.

‘Yes,’ replied Mr. Denison.

‘And she is not going to be a governess amongst the pomps and vanities ?’

‘No ; she is going to marry a man of genius ; to be great sometime. And we are not going to travel about any more just now. When we go to Italy next, you shall go with us, Aunt Rachel ; but for the present—this is a very aristocratic place, you know, in the season—we shall be content to settle down under Gwyneth’s warning lights.’

MY ESCAPE FROM HYDROPATHY ;

Or what cold Water did for me.

WHEN our troubles are such as we could by no means have averted or avoided, kind friends sometimes feel for us ; but when we suffer for our own folly we have little right to seek, and still less to expect, much sympathy. The writer of the following few pages accordingly looks not for one word of pity, not a sympathising thought from those who read them ; for he freely admits his to have been the latter case, he having deliberately submitted to the scourge that chastised him so severely.

By no means out of health, yet overdone with study some few years back, I resolved to put my books away, and to combine a little change of scene with a short but thorough holiday. The question was, Whither should I betake myself ? It was the depth of winter ; the very season when of all others there is no place like home. The seaside would be dreary. For amusement there would of course be nothing like London ; but then I wanted freshening, and I had my doubts whether the atmosphere of town was the best for that purpose. I was a town bird myself, and had a notion that country air would be the thing for me ; but just fancy a lodging in a retired village, or at a farm-house in a meadow, at such a time of year !

In the midst of my difficulty a friend called.

‘ I have it,’ said he. ‘ Have you ever been to —— ?’

‘ No, I have not,’ was my reply ; ‘ but that is a cold-water establishment, is it not ?’

‘ O, never you mind that. You are not obliged to become a patient unless you like. I go there sometimes when I want a change, simply as a visitor, and am taken *en pension*. It is a capital place. The situation is most healthy. You fare plainly but well, and the house is generally full in winter. Take my

advice and try it, for it offers exactly what you want—country air without the attendant drawbacks which you so much dread.’

I needed no more urging. I thanked my friend for his suggestion; and before I was twenty-four hours older I packed up my portmanteau and was on my way to —.

One always forms beforehand one’s notions of people and of places—generally how erroneous are they! All the journey through I had been picturing—to myself, and of course when I reached the spot I found my preconceived notions, as usual, quite unlike the reality; and I confess I felt most agreeably disappointed as I drove through the well-kept grounds up to the door of the establishment.

No dismal infirmary-looking building was this, but a handsome and imposing mansion, which many a nobleman might be pardoned coveting. I alighted, and as I entered the spacious hall received a hearty welcome from the hydropathic host, who concluded his salutations by expressing his conviction that a few weeks of the treatment would remove the symptoms from which I was suffering. This was probably a cut-and-dried speech where-with every fresh patient was greeted, by way of inspiring confidence; but having no wish to be regarded as an invalid, or ‘treated’ with cold water, I deemed it well to set the worthy doctor right at once, and told him I thought he must have mistaken me for some one else, as I had come merely as a visitor, and should not trouble him at present to prescribe for me.

‘O, I beg your pardon,’ replied he, ‘you are Mr. —, who wrote to me from —; I remember now all about it. How is Mr. —?’ alluding to my friend who had recommended my coming to the place.

Having been shown my room upstairs—a plainly but comfortably-furnished one, the window of which commanded a view which in summer must have been exquisite,—I was taken and introduced as the last arrival to the inmates of the establishment.

The patients numbered between thirty and forty, of both sexes, of divers and of doubtful ages, for the most part bachelors and single ladies. Of these some were invalids and no mistake, but others looked quite hale and hearty. I learned, however, that all were undergoing the treatment; so that I should be the solitary looker-on. The prevailing topic of conversation was ‘the treatment,’ which was expatiated upon well-nigh incessantly and with more or less enthusiasm, according to the degree of benefit

derived. There were some who, having pursued other systems without avail, had wound-up here as a *dernier ressort*. They had tried allopathy and homœopathy, and I know not what other pathy, and now hydropathy was taking its turn—expected to accomplish the uphill work of undoing all the mischief which preceding systems had effected. And one or two had already tried hydropathy elsewhere. Past experience had, it is true, not been very encouraging, but then they had heard there was a special virtue in the water of —, and Dr. — was such a clever man! So judicious too! He knew exactly how to suit his treatment to the strength of his patients. They never felt so hopeful of recovery as they did now; they only regretted not having come to — sooner.

With scarcely an exception, all spoke in a similar strain; a feeling of unbounded confidence in the system they were at that moment pursuing pervading the party. To me, who never had been initiated into the mysteries or the technicalities of hydropathy, the whole process seemed unintelligible; and as I sat and listened to the patients descanting on the merits and effects peculiar to the ‘douche,’ and the ‘lamp,’ and the ‘packing,’ I fairly wondered what it all could mean. I know not whether I felt the more amazed or amused at the learned and elaborate disquisitions upon pathology, which some of these amateurs in physic entered into; and certainly, to judge from the familiarity with which medical terms were quoted, and the readiness wherewith the anatomical vocabulary was appealed to, one might have supposed some even of the gentler portion of the company had had the advantage of promenading it at Guy’s. In fact, I learnt more about cutaneous action and reaction, about circulation and respiration, congestion and digestion, from simply listening to what passed than I had ever succeeded in taking in during my whole life before. I made no secret of my ignorance, for which no doubt I was much commiserated, especially by one of the patients, a matronly lady, who kindly undertook to make me for the moment her pupil.

‘You see, sir,’ she began, ‘the great advantage of the hydropathic treatment is that it assists nature.’

‘Indeed, ma’am. I presume when nature needs assistance?’

‘Precisely. There is in nature a great principle which physicians of the old school failed to recognise, the principle of self-restoration. By that is meant the tendency in nature to labour for its own cure, and that is what hydropathy seeks, and seeks so successfully to encourage and develop.’

‘I have heard of that property of nature before which you refer to, and I do so thoroughly believe in it that I am convinced we should often do much better did we leave her alone to work a cure for herself.’

‘Sometimes, I grant, that may be so; but suppose nature labouring to a disadvantage with enfeebled organs, it may be unable to develop those symptoms which are, in fact, the safety-valves for the escape of disease.’

‘I daresay I am very stupid, but it seems to me, in the absence of symptoms, we ought not to concern ourselves about disease.’

‘You do not understand me quite. Suppose there to be indications of a disposition on the part of nature to expel disease through the cuticle, but only partially succeeding; do you not think we should take a hint, and seek to develop her external action to the full?’

I began to fear my learned instructress was getting far beyond me; however, I replied,

‘Perhaps so.’

‘And in case nature should be unwilling so to act at all, to originate such action?’

‘Well, I am not so sure about that. I think we are going a little too fast when we set about originating symptoms, and suggesting to Dame Nature a course which may be far from her purpose.’

‘So many, like yourself, have thought; but the results in multitudes of cases have proved the correctness of the theory, and one, I may say the chief, aim of hydropathy is to encourage such action—mainly external—as will tend to expel disease.’

‘I should be afraid of it.’

‘O, there is nothing to fear in it. It is the safest of all systems; and most interesting is it to watch its working either in one’s own case or in others’, from the commencement of its operation to the effecting of its crisis.’

‘I beg your pardon, I did not quite catch that word.’

‘A crisis, sir; a crisis.’

‘Then matters come to a crisis, do they? Of what nature is that crisis, may I ask?’

‘Why, it varies. Sometimes it manifests itself in an acute attack of the patient’s present complaint, or one of some former period, which, it was supposed, had disappeared long ago; sometimes in violent sickness; frequently in a cutaneous eruption which lasts for several days; and occasionally a mild form of

insanity will appear ; but, indeed, there is no determining beforehand what form the crisis may assume.'

'What a dreadful state of apprehension the patient must be in while anticipating any such seizures ! Do all pass through this crisis ?'

'No, by no means all ; but the most successful cases experience it. Now, I am expecting to pass through this stage, I may say, daily, and I do hope I shall not be disappointed. I have been quite longing for an attack of some sort or other to convince me of the effective working of the cure in my case.'

'And why is this termed a crisis ?'

'Because it is the critical stage of the treatment. It is the turning-point in the complaint, which is so much to be desired.'

'But the complaint might happen afterwards to take a turn the wrong way. What a sad consummation that would be ! Has such a thing ever been known ?'

'Whether such a result as you suggest has ever been known, I cannot tell you ; but soon after the appearance of the crisis, the treatment is generally at an end, and the patient quits the establishment.'

'I should say it was then quite time.'

'I perceive you are very sceptical ; but I don't despair of seeing you yet a convert before leaving us, and perhaps submitting to the treatment.'

'No, I think not. The prospect of some terrible crisis, such as you have described, would of itself deter me from meddling with hydropathy.'

'Pray don't allow anything I have said to alarm you. Perhaps I have unduly represented the formidable nature of the crisis. It is by no means such a dreadful thing. Now that gentleman there' (pointing to one of the patients on a sofa close by) 'has just passed through it, and is going home to-morrow.'

It may be well to state here that the individual referred to was the picture of an invalid. His body was so thin that his clothes seemed to hang upon him. His face was fearfully covered with blotches, as though he had recently recovered from the small-pox. What skin there was was deadly pale. Altogether his aspect was truly deplorable.

'He looks dreadfully ill, poor fellow,' I remarked.

'Do you think so ? Why, that is one of our show-cases. Hydropathy has done wonders for that gentleman. I cannot tell you what a change it has effected in him. When he first came here he was quite of a corpulent habit. His cheeks were un-

naturally full and high-coloured, and it was plain his was a case needing strong treatment. Dr. — said he would soon alter all that, only give him time. And sure enough, after praiseworthy perseverance for two months, the welcome crisis supervened. He awoke up one morning covered with an infinity of boils. For a fortnight or so he suffered grievously, finding ease in no position. But he is now getting rid of this inconvenience, and fast regaining his health. I am sure Dr. — deserves great credit for the case, having wrought such a change in him that his friends will scarcely recognise him.'

'That I can quite believe. At the same time, I must tell you he is about the last person I should have thought of styling a show-patient ; and for my part, were I so disfigured, I would go and hide myself somewhere till I had regained some of my good looks. Why, the man will prove an antidote to hydrophathy wherever he exhibits himself.'

I was fortunate in witnessing this case ; for, as it happened, no similar one occurred, nor did any crisis transpire, while I was at the establishment, at least none came to my knowledge ; but I was told such effects were by no means uncommon ; and the simple view which I, as a plain man, would have taken of such a condition was, that by dint of constant external and internal application of water, the blood of the sufferer had become so thoroughly impoverished or diluted, that results had followed exactly similar to those that arise from a long course of poor or insufficient diet.

To do them justice, the patients appeared to go through the system in right earnest. All seemed to persist in it with a zeal worthy of the best of causes. I detected no evasion of the discipline, or departure from the prescribed *regimen*. The stated number of baths, and the specified number of libations to be taken in the day, were rigidly adhered to, in spite of any amount of inconvenience or disinclination.

The hours of the establishment were early. The place was all astir at six o'clock, soon after which hour nearly all the inmates took their first bath ; and vain was it for any light sleeper like myself to court slumber after business had begun. I could hear my neighbours overhead, or alongside of me, hard at their elaborate aquatic exercises every morning. The same routine of sounds was gone through day after day. First would come the pouring and splashing of water into the various tin reservoirs, then a slight pause, and one heard the unmistakable plunge in of the patient, not unfrequently accompanied by a faint yell on

encountering the first shock of the cold element ; then came a distinct thud upon the floor, the patient was out again ; and lastly, you heard the voices of patients and attendants in conversation, while the former were being rubbed down by the latter. The process of dressing being completed, a walk of half an hour or so was the next thing, unless the elements positively forbade such a proceeding ; so an interval would succeed, during which the house was empty and quiet until the clock struck eight, when the patients rallied to the breakfast-room.

A walk before breakfast in the depth of winter is a cheerless thing, especially when that meal is at eight, and the sun does not rise much before that hour. Still, although some mornings it was almost dark, even ladies turned out to take their early airing in the gloom, and snatch, it was hoped, the pearl of health from Nature while she lay but half awake. The result, however, of this preface to the day was beyond all question : it made itself evident at the breakfast-table in the unmistakable avidity—not to use a stronger word—wherewith all met their meal whose appetites had had the benefit of ventilation. The fare was plain, but good. You had the choice of two beverages—tea or cocoa, coffee being a forbidden thing ; choice of two breads also—white or brown—both of yesterday's baking, if not the day's before ; you might, besides, have cold meat or eggs ; both if you liked, for there was, as far as I could see, no restriction laid upon the patients as to the amount to be taken in. The facility with which the well-covered table was relieved of its morning burden fairly amazed me ; and as I found my own power of appropriation sadly inferior to that of my fellow-breakfasters, I confess I longed to pick up somewhat of this hydropathic hunger.

How is it ? thought I ; these folks are invalids, while I am supposed to be in health ; still they can eat a hearty meal at eight o'clock, and I can't !

Truth to tell, I felt envious of their appetite ; my feelings probably resembling those of a young lady in a ball-room, who, having never learnt to dance, is fain to be content with looking on at her companions while they trip it on the light fantastic toe.

So far all was very well. Thus much of the system was highly beneficial. There are very few, I feel convinced, who would not find themselves great gainers in the way of health if they would but take to early rising and a regular cold bath all through the year, not omitting the sequel of a quick walk in the fresh air till breakfast-time. We should have fewer complaints

of seediness in the morning, if this practice were more generally resorted to ; and many who suffer from dyspepsia might, I believe, thus wash off the first half of it in their dressing-room, and blow away the other half outside. But, as it is, some dine late, others sup late ; bed is, for the most part, not forsaken till the last moment ; there is an effort to cram the toilet into the smallest possible space of time, and folks hurry to the breakfast-room fresh from the land of dreams, though anything but fresh as regards physical and digestive energies ; then they wonder that they are not hungry for their morning meal. Where is the wonder ? The stomach is probably still contemplating the tribute of the night before, and is not just yet looking for another windfall. Perhaps, like its owner, it, too, has been napping in the night, and has left its work to stand over till next morning ; and scarcely is it cause for astonishment if there is an indisposition to take in another job while there is still a heavy one on hand. Too much can hardly, then, be said in praise of that portion of the hydropathic code which knocks such habits on the head ; and though I was a sufferer, as will presently be seen, from the cold-water treatment generally, I will not utter a syllable in disparagement of the free-breakfast part of the system.

Amongst the patients I found two or three of a congenial spirit, with whom I fraternised extensively, especially one, a captain, but just come home from the Crimea, and who, in addition to his medals, had brought away a more effectual, though less welcome, memento of his campaigning in the shape of chronic rheumatism, for which he had hitherto vainly sought a remedy. With this exception he enjoyed perfect health, and when free from pain could take his ten or twelve miles' walk as well as any man. I saw a good deal of him, and was never tired of listening to his Crimean anecdotes ; but we chatted on other subjects besides the Russian war, and I think our conversation generally drifted into a discussion of the hydropathic system.

'Have you been long at the establishment ?' I one day asked him, at the beginning of our acquaintance.

'I have nearly spent a month here. I came, I think, the second week in December.'

'And what do you think of the treatment ? Are you deriving any benefit from it ?'

'Well, my general health is certainly improved ; not that I was much amiss before ; but in a general way I feel invigorated. As regards my rheumatism, however, which was the cause of my coming here, I must confess to feeling somewhat of disappoint-

ment. Perhaps my attacks of pain are not quite so frequent as they used to be, but when the pains do come on, they are every bit as violent as they were before. But how do you like the place? you are not under the treatment, are you?

'No, I am not undergoing the water-cure, as I scarcely felt sufficiently out of sorts to warrant my subjecting myself to it. I am, however, participating so far in the system that I rise and take my cold bath two hours earlier than I am in the habit of doing. I am also trying the experiment of a walk before breakfast, which is quite a novelty to me.'

'What a pity to stop there! Take my advice, and go in for a course of the treatment. Ask the doctor to prescribe for you as he has done for me, and I am sure it will do you good.'

'No; I think not, at present. I shall content myself with the change of air, and of hours, and of diet, and see what that will do for me. There is one thing I miss here dreadfully, and that is a glass of wine or a drop of beer; something better than water during dinner.'

'Ah! I felt just the same. For some days I was very good, and tried hard to gulp down the cold water; but it was no go, my stomach wouldn't stand it, so I gave it up, and have since consoled myself with a substitute upstairs.'

'How do you manage that?'

'O, very simply. I never leave home, that is to say, without a travelling-companion in the shape of a portable canteen. It looks like a large dressing-case, but it is capable of carrying half-a-dozen bottles of wine. On coming down here I brought my companion with me; and really it is a most fortunate thing I did so, for without a little stimulant I find I cannot get on.'

'But does not drinking wine rather interfere with the treatment? I have heard that it does.'

'Quite a mistake, I assure you; quite a mistake. The fact is, under hydropathy you need stimulants more than at any other time, for it has a lowering tendency. The doctor, deluded man, supposes I drink water; but, should he cure me, I intend to tell him that I have had a glass or two of wine every day.'

'Would he be much annoyed if he knew it?'

'O, I expect he would drop on to me pretty sharply. He would say I had been deceiving him, and we should probably have a scene. I wish to avoid this; so when he reminds me to drink water at intervals during the day, I say nothing, but mentally I label his decanters "For external application only."'

‘You amuse me with your dodging of the doctor ; but, I suppose, in other matters you conform ?’

‘Yes, rigidly. I take my three baths daily : and though I brought a lot of medicine with me, I flung it all away, for fear I should be tempted to violate the rule that prohibits everything but hydropathic remedies.’

‘And are you one of the anxious expectants of a crisis, may I ask ?’

‘Not I. Mine, the doctor tells me, is no case for crisis. The fact is, such things only come on when the blood is in a very bad state, or there is a malignant disease of some sort in the constitution. But tell me, what have you heard about the crisis ?’

‘O, enough to terrify me from having anything to do with hydropathy.’

‘What nonsense ! And has that been the only thing to hinder you from trying it ? You may depend on it *you* would never have experienced a crisis ; unless, indeed, there is far more the matter with you than I take there to be. But you have never told me what brought you to this place.’

‘Why, you see, I read and write a good deal, which confines me mostly to the house. I have led a sedentary life for some time now without a break ; but latterly I began to feel I must shut-up. I could not sleep at nights, and my appetite fell off completely ; so I came off here for change and perfect rest.’

‘Is that all ? Why, yours is the very case to be benefited by the treatment. Do be prevailed upon to try it. You’ll lay in a stock of health, and go home a new man.’

Thus my friend resumed his pleading for hydropathy. Much more passed upon the subject, he arguing strongly in its favour, and endeavouring to dissipate my prejudices ; and I stoutly resisting his entreaties that I should give it a trial, till at length—will it be credited?—I gave in. In an evil moment I was persuaded to vote myself a patient, and go before the doctor next morning.

Dr. — had a stated time for seeing patients after nine o’clock. At the stated hour in I turned to the consultation-room. A victim had that moment come away. The doctor motioned me to the chair but just vacated—a chair in which some hundreds, probably, had sat before me—a chair which, could it but have spoken, might have related many a sad case of suffering. Some droll tales, too, it might have told, it may be ; for no doubt hypochondriacs had sat there also. Into that same chair

I dropped, the doctor assuming his regular consultation look—all gravity and mute attention—while I explained my case.

‘Doctor,’ said I, ‘I am going to try a course of your treatment, after all.’

‘I think you are very wise. Have you anything particular that wants attending to? Anything about the system not working well? Is your general health good?’

‘Well, I don’t think there is much wrong with me; but I am anxious to give hydropathy a trial, because they tell me it benefits the healthy and the strong as well as invalids.’

‘So, unquestionably, it does. But would you just let me feel your pulse, and look at your tongue; for we doctors frequently discover indications of morbid action when all is supposed to be going on well. Indeed it was only yesterday I detected symptoms of a latent disorder in a gentleman who quite ridiculed the notion of being out of health—an affection which was insidiously undermining his constitution, and which, had it been neglected, must ultimately have assumed a fatal form.’

I own I did not quite like this style of talk. The thought of being preyed upon by some concealed disease which you do not feel is disagreeable. I, too, might possibly be the victim of some hidden malady, to be discovered there and then. I made no answer, but just held my tongue in check till his was quiet, when out I shot it to its utmost length. I know not what he saw thereon, or what he gathered from my throbbing vein; but he answered with a physician’s ‘Hum!’ and asked me if my appetite was good. I admitted that it was at fault.

‘I am not surprised,’ said he, ‘to hear it. I should have been surprised had it been otherwise. Your digestion is evidently out of order. Hence, too, the bad nights which you complain of. Your pulse is full and sluggish; you are suffering from—’ Here, inspired man, he went into an elaborate diagnosis of my case, letting loose a complete storm of medical jargon, placing me, as it were, under his verbal shower-bath while he pulled the string, and soused me with a torrent of physiological technicalities from which I at length emerged very little the wiser for the infliction. ‘But,’ added he, ‘I am happy to tell you, I can discover no trace of anything like organic disease about you.’

This was consoling, and the relief to me was great. For to one like myself, unversed in medical phraseology, it seemed as if something awful must result from such a combination of verbal prodigies; and how it came to pass—unless on the principle that one ailment combats another—that so formidable a train of ana-

tomical mechanism could all be out of order, and yet produce, I may say, nothing, will remain a mystery with me to the end.

‘Well, doctor, what do you recommend me to do?’ said I, anxious to come to something practical.

‘I am writing some instructions for you. Here they are. Hang them up on a hook you will see over your bedroom mantel-piece. In the morning, first thing, take a glass of water—two if you like—then a tepid bath, the temperature to be gradually reduced till quite cold. Then walk till breakfast-time. Another half-pint of water towards eleven o’clock, followed by a lamp-bath and another walk. Take about a pint at four o’clock, and a sitz-bath after it. Let the cold water be applied to the back of the neck, and allowed to trickle down the spine. Mind, a walk after every bath. Keep that up till I see you again in a few days’ time. I shall soon cure you.’

I departed with my watery prescription, prepared to carry it out to the very letter. I confess I dreaded those unpalatable draughts ; but they should go down with all their tastelessness, and not even my friend the captain should induce me to omit them, or touch a drop of something stronger. An attendant, one Jack Smart, was selected to put me through my hydropathic drill. He was a capital fellow in his way, who had not spent three years at the establishment in vain. He knew all about the treatment, and has probably, by this time, set up on his own account. Of the two, I preferred Jack infinitely to his master, because he did not seek to mystify me with scientific bosh. His distortions of his master’s terms were sometimes most amusing. He had a patient in the room below, he informed me, a source of much anxiety to him ; and almost daily was I wicked enough to inquire what it was that ailed the gentleman, in order to elicit the same descriptive answer—‘Conjecture of the liver, sir ; conjecture of the liver.’ His notions of the action of water on the human frame were, to himself, quite satisfactory ; whilst to me they were as unanswerable as they were entertaining.

‘I hope, sir, you drink plenty of water,’ said he one day, while rubbing me down.

‘Why, Smart?’ said I.

‘Because, sir, you needs it on account of all this here perspiration. That’s how ’tis, sir, as many of our patients don’t derive no good. The bath drains off, like, what you drinks in. But if so be as you takes the bath only, and don’t take in liquid accordin’, why, don’t you see, sir, ’tis just like workin’ the pump

when there ain't no water in the well ; and that's it as does the mischief to the constitution. But by keepin' up a good supply inside, and workin' it out continually through the pores of the skin, there's a constant flowin' always kept a-goin', as draws off all them things the master calls the acrid rumours.'

Far were it from me to dispute this admirable theory. Why should I, with no better to replace it by? He had others in abundance, equally conclusive and amusing, to which, by dint of strong effort, I was generally a smileless listener.

But few will care to study Smart upon hydropathy ; so on I pass, to specify a sample or two of the processes to which I was subjected. And of all the inventions for bringing a man down, commend me to the lamp-bath. This, it will be borne in mind, was to constitute my mid-day operation. Accordingly, at the hour named, acting under Jack Smart's guidance, I proceeded to unrobe. A kitchen chair—one with a wooden seat—was ready to receive me. I sat therein in wonderment at what was coming ; but as I beheld my attendant deliberately place a light upon the floor beneath me, I was just as well content that there was something denser than cane wicker-work between me and the flame. No sooner was I seated, than my hydropathic valet wrapped a blanket round my quivering frame, enclosing chair and light as he folded it around me. He then applied a second in like manner, and a third, taking care to leave no aperture by which the cold air from without might gain access to the heated air within. There I sat, enveloped to the chin, my head alone emerging, sphinx-like, at the vertex of the woollen pyramid. I never before knew how simple a thing it is to get warm, nay hot, in the coldest winter's day ; but soon I made the discovery that none need shiver long who can command a blanket or two, a farthing rushlight, and a wooden chair.

I may have sat some fifteen minutes—to me it seemed much more—when I was led to feel that all below my chin was gradually being baked. At first the warmth was pleasant, and I was led to think the lamp-bath not a bad thing, after all ; but the temperature rose, and rapidly became oppressive. Moisture oozed from every pore ; then it literally flowed ; fumes of thick hot vapour forced a passage through the blankets, enveloping me in a cloud of steam. I felt I could not stand it any longer, and appealed to Smart to set me free. He urged me to submit a little longer ; but I said, 'No, not another moment.' He said the bath was just beginning to work beautifully ; that I should spoil its operation if I stopped just then. I replied, 'I didn't

care. Take off these blankets instantly, or I will rise and fling them from me.'

A slight movement on my part convinced the man I was in earnest, so he reluctantly complied. A word or two of something like respectful remonstrance at my impatience escaped my well-meaning attendant as he proceeded rapidly to uncover me, bidding me at the same time to lose not an instant on emerging from my wrapping, but to plunge forthwith into a cold bath that awaited me in the corner. Quick as thought I did so. Dripping and smoking as I was, I hurriedly lay down in the cold water, regardless of all preconceived notions of the risk of checking perspiration, and so forth. But how refreshing was that plunge! How delicious the sensation of that instantaneous chill! My sufferings while under distillation were all forgotten in the luxury of that momentary dip. Nay, the relief was so delightful, that it more than compensated for all my baking in the chair, and I resolved to go through the ordeal more patiently next time. But little more than a second was allowed me—two at the very outside; Jack Smart was waiting with a rough bathing-sheet, into which he summoned me without delay; and then he set to rubbing me. What a famous rubber that man was! Had I been a horse, what a coat he would have given me! He seemed to throw his whole strength into this part of the operation. As he rubbed, he pressed, or rather leant, against me; while I, like John Gilpin's horse, 'who never in that sort had handled been before,' had hard work to hold my ground against the onsets of my assailant; till at length, beginning himself to pant under the effort, he told me he thought that would do, and I might retire. So ended the lamp-bath—an appliance of which I had heard the patients talk so much, and of which hitherto I knew so little. The whole process usually lasted about three-quarters of an hour—a period of physical excitement, and one in which not a little was effected. The result of a series of such baths—so lowering, so exhausting to the frame—must be obvious to the most ordinary thinker. Two or three may be taken with impunity, though I have known a strong man swoon away under the third; but there are very few indeed who can bear to have their strength day after day thus distilled out of them without giving way before such treatment. So with myself. After my first lamp-bath, I felt much refreshed. It seemed to me I had been relieved of a weight; I felt lighter everywhere. In place of losing strength, I felt myself altogether more elastic, and my sensations generally were so satisfactory, that I became enthusi-

astic in praise of the bath in question. After, however, my third, I think it was, I imagined I had grown weaker. I rose from my seat anything but renovated, and after coming out of the cold water, I felt more inclined to go to bed than to take exercise. I tried hard to persuade myself 'twas fancy. I thought to walk it off, but it wouldn't do; the walk I used to take with ease now knocked me up, and I was fain to be satisfied with half the distance. I told the doctor I was losing strength. He did not say at once the lamp-bath had done it, but tacitly he recognised the fact, for he bade me suspend them for the present. I was to continue the morning and evening bath 'as before,' but at mid-day my attendant was to 'pack' me until further orders. I ought here to mention, in justice to the system, that the only points in which there was a symptom of falling off were muscular energy and superfluous flesh. Some, perhaps, will think these quite sufficient to awaken apprehension; but in other respects there was improvement. I slept like a top. My digestion had mended, for my appetite approached the ravenous. I sat down feeling what I had so eagerly longed to feel—hungry for breakfast; and my performance at the table did high credit to the treatment. My fellow-patients affirmed they perceived improvement in my looks—my complexion was clearer, said they. It may have been so; nevertheless, I was weaker. 'You will soon regain your strength,' was the consoling assurance I met with on all sides. I hoped I should.

I have abstained from encroaching on the patience of the reader with a wearisome description of the sitz-bath, for there is really nothing in it to describe; but perhaps I ought to say a word or two on 'packing,' for the term is by no means self-explanatory.

My first essay in this damp diversion I shall bear in mind for some time to come, having, through the carelessness of my attendant, had a slight mishap while undergoing it, which has served to impress it rather vividly upon my memory. Unhappily for me, my regular bath-man was absent for the day, and I was handed over to the tender mercies of another of the fraternity, who proved but a sorry substitute for the efficient Jack Smart. I perceived this before the fellow had been five minutes in the room with me. He was dull and unenergetic—two faults fatal in a hydropathic attendant. At his bidding, however, I undressed and turned in between the blankets, while he was slowly wringing out a sheet in the big bath already referred to. I was to be packed in that sheet. I awaited the man with an

instinctive shudder; and what a shock it gave me when my flesh first came in contact with the cold wet linen! What misery did I endure whilst being plastered with the icy shroud! How horribly it held me in its clammy folds! Over and over was I rolled, while the attendant coiled the chilly wrapper round my quivering frame. Arms and all went in, everything except my head being bound up or packed inside the sheet. In short, I was literally bandaged like a mummy, and lay as helpless on my back as any Egyptian specimen. Then, as in the case of the lamp-bath, came blankets in profusion, not merely laid upon me, but tucked well in at the sides, depriving me still more of any motive power. And now the 'packing' process was complete. As far as I can remember, twenty minutes was the time prescribed by the doctor for remaining in a state of 'pack;' so I ordered the man to hang my watch up by me, and then bade him leave me to my thoughts, telling him to be sure and make his reappearance in a quarter of an hour's time. I heard the door shut; I knew I was alone and powerless to raise a finger; but it was winter time, and so I congratulated myself that there was no fear of a gnat settling on my nose. The shiver which I felt at first subsided very quickly, the sheet soon acquiring the heat of the enveloped animal, and in less than ten minutes' time I was letting off steam like a boiled roly-poly. There I lay puffing on my back, oppressed with the superincumbent weight of bedclothes, longing for my liberation. What wretchedness it was! The lamp-bath, thought I, was bad enough, but packing beats it into fits. Whatever I endure, here I must lie and bear it. How eagerly I watched the hands of my chronometer! What a comfort to feel that five minutes more would see me out of misery! But how was this? It was past the quarter, and the man had not come back. I'll wait till the time is up before I call; he is sure to be outside the door. I kept my eye upon the minute-hand as it sluggishly approached the longed-for point upon the dial. At last it reached it—the time was up. 'Hallo there!' shouted I; 'come in—the time's up.' But it was like shouting to the winds, the fellow was out of hearing. I shouted louder in the hope that, though he heard me not, some one else would, to whom I might communicate my plight; but though I fancied I heard sounds in the adjoining room, no one seemed to hear my bawling. I had better lie still and submit patiently to my fate. No, I could not. The feeling of restraint alone had grown insupportable, to say nothing of the stifling heat which was increasing with every effort I made. I never knew what

desperation was till then. Five-and-twenty minutes had I lain thus tied and bound and motionless, fixed in a position which seemed hopelessly unchangeable.

Describe my feelings I cannot; but I remember self-reproach and rage entered largely into them. What a fool I was, ever to have let the fellow go! Was he coming back at all, or should I have to wait till night to be released from this state of thralldom? I felt I should be dead by then. I was getting excited. I thought I could not breathe. How I escaped an apoplectic fit, I know not. How I struggled to get loose! But my struggles were not wholly ineffectual. I found I could bend my elbows sufficiently to rest upon them; that by a violent effort I could draw myself up it might be an inch. This was a grand discovery. I persevered in the effort, delighted to find I was slowly worming my way out of my cocoon of bedclothes, till, by dint of straining and forcing, out I fell upon the floor, head foremost, completely exhausted with my exertions. I suppose I made considerable noise in falling, for an attendant who happened to be passing, judging there was something wrong, tapped and came in. Poor man! he appeared much concerned at seeing me; and when he learned the nature of my mishap, he seemed to share in some degree the indignation which I felt with Smart's stupid deputy. It turned out, as I suspected, that the good-for-nothing fellow, who had other patients to attend to, had forgotten all about me, his ill-fated supernumerary.

Most richly would he have deserved his *cong  *, and his master was for turning him adrift the moment he heard of his negligence; but I interceded for him, pleading extenuating circumstances, and so the man was kept on, to perpetuate, it may be, similar acts of forgetfulness upon subsequent victims.

The recital of my misfortune elicited much merriment from the patients, who thought it a capital joke, at the same time one which they appeared to prefer avoiding, resolutions being taken there and then not to give an attendant leave of absence whilst lying in the helplessness of 'pack.' I need hardly say I subscribed heartily to that resolution, and in after-packings, of which I underwent a few, I kept my man in the room with me till the operation was quite concluded. I had now persisted in the treatment for some weeks, being in turn subjected to most, if not all, of the divers hydropathic appliances in vogue at the establishment. With the exception of that awful thing, the *douche*, those to which I have referred were probably among the most effective, and told most upon the frame. At least, so I

found them. I was manifestly losing flesh, and that fast. Had my loss been computed by the pound, I feel assured it would have shocked me. These pounds had mostly, I suppose, gone off in vapour, though no doubt something should be put down to Jack Smart's rubbing. But it mattered little how they had vanished, the fact was beyond question. To this my clothes bore witness. It was clear they had been made to fit a bigger man than my present self. When I first came to the place my garments were in close contact with my person, but now my person was retreating from them inwardly, leaving a chilly passage betwixt me and my clothing ; a sort of cold-air flue, through which a constant ventilation was maintained that ill-assorted with the season. This diminution of my form would perhaps have signified little, had it not been accompanied by weakness, increasing weakness. I felt it chiefly in my limbs, from the hips downwards. My ambulatory powers were evidently on the decrease. I could not walk any distance without wanting to sit down and rest. It seemed as if a hundredweight had been attached to each foot, such a labour was it to drag them after me. I dreaded going upstairs. When evening came on, I found myself regularly done up, and glad was I to recline full length upon a couch, longing as I lay for bedtime to arrive. I was now beginning to feel some anxiety about my case, not because I had grown thinner, but because I was losing strength. There could not now be any doubt that there was something wrong, or what could occasion this debility ? That the treatment had reduced me, I never for a moment doubted ; but that did not distress me, as I thought I had some spare flesh which I might conveniently dispense with. But that the system I was going through contributed in any measure to my weakness never entered my imagination. Of course I told the doctor all about it. According to his opinion, it was my liver which was at the root of my trouble. He affirmed, as doctors always do, that mine was quite a common case ; that he had seen hundreds such ; that symptoms like mine were the general result of inactivity of liver. 'You may consider yourself fortunate,' said he, 'in having come here when you did. Had you placed yourself under some allopath, he would have dosed you with calomel and damaged your constitution ; whereas you'll see we shall set you right without mercury or any drugs at all.'

'Well but, doctor,' I replied, 'can you give me any idea of the time which it may take for the treatment to work a cure in my case, because I have now been six weeks at it, and am certainly far worse than when I came here.'

‘O, don’t say so. I really think you better. I see the greatest improvement in your appearance ; perhaps it may be some weeks yet before you are quite yourself. Only persevere in the treatment, and don’t distress yourself about a little temporary debility.’

The prospect was not cheering. Some weeks yet ! and then only ‘perhaps.’ I had half a mind to take a dose of calomel on the sly ; but I knew not how hydropathy and calomel might suit one another, and I feared I might take cold ; so I submissively adhered to the treatment, living on from day to day in hope, anxious hope, for symptoms of returning strength. But vainly did I watch for any indication of improvement. On the contrary, I was growing worse. Perceiving this, I became unhappy. I believed I was in for a long period of invalidhood, and began to have my doubts as to whether I should recover at all. I longed to be at home. A cold-water establishment is, after all, a heartless place for one really out of health, and I had had quite enough of it ; so I resolved, weak as I was, to come away. I communicated my determination to the doctor, who, after trying in vain to induce me to stay on, implored me not to consult an allopath, but to persist in the treatment after I reached home. But how altered was I ! How different did I feel myself as I crawled with difficulty up the steps to my hall-door to what I was when I left home some two months ago ! What benefit had I gotten by that two months’ change ? That it never should have occurred to me to connect the treatment with my debility seems to myself amazing. I was content to believe my weakness in the limbs arose from some complaint or other ; if not an affection of the liver, of something equally serious, for which the best, if not the only, cure was hydropathy.

Whilst at the establishment I had caught the mania from the other patients, and had become as enthusiastic a believer in its efficacy as any of its most ardent devotees. I would not listen to a word in its disparagement, but was wont to wax hot in its defence. Accordingly, on my return home, I immediately proceeded to set myself up with the various hydropathic paraphernalia, resolved to carry out the system to the best of my ability. I embarked a small fortune in baths, bathing-sheets, and water-cans, not forgetting the article with the wooden seat for the lamp-bath operation. Two difficulties, however, met me in my attempt to set up a private water-cure : one was, the erection of a douche ; the other, the supplying an equivalent to Jack Smart. But I was not to be discouraged, and contented myself with ap-

proximations to both as near as I could accomplish. To set up a veritable douche I found out of the question. It involved letting in a pipe through the ceiling of my room, and a reservoir somewhere on the roof of my house ; so I abandoned the project. But I had my douche all the same, such as it was. I procured a huge syringe, and taught my servant how to work it, and with practice he became quite expert in handling this weapon, taking an excellent shot with the jet, and maintaining a steady fire at the spot selected as a target for the time being. But when he came to rub me, how I missed Jack Smart ! O ! there is an art in rubbing which not many understand. It is, in fact, a talent possessed by but a few, of whom my servant evidently was not one. I used to dread rubbing-time with him. I felt as though I had been scraped all over with sand-paper, my skin being in a state but one remove from rawness when this process was concluded. Nevertheless I bore it with a good grace, only thinking myself lucky in having attained so fair an imitation of the model I had come from. I thus kept up these hydropathic practices all through the winter and well into the spring, watching with concern the constant increase of debility, and wondering what ever could have come to me. I had in my youth been much given to gymnastics. I had thought nothing of hanging by my heels, and doing other inverted eccentricities on the horizontal bar. The muscles of my limbs had by these exercises acquired, when I was young, a hardness and a tightness which they had retained. But now, all this firmness was gone. My thighs had grown soft and flabby, and were growing more so every day.

Paralysis must, thought I, sooner or later, come upon me. What a poser my case was to the doctors ! I consulted not a few, but not one could detect physical disorder, or a symptom indicative of disease, functional or organic ; I was sound, said they, in every respect, and with one consent they gave their decided opinion against my having any liver affection. As my object was merely to discover what was the seat of my ailment, I thought it desirable to conceal from the physicians I consulted the remedies I was resorting to. Probably any one of them would, had I told him, have said sufficient to make me drop the water-cure for ever. But I kept my secret well, and paid well for it. How long I might thus have gone on, or to what state I might at the end of a few months more have reduced myself, it were difficult to say ; but as the weather was growing finer, I resolved to try, as a *dernier ressort*, what change of air would

do. 'Go,' said some friend or other, 'to some bracing place by the sea-side.' I selected Ramsgate—a bracing place enough in April, in all conscience. But hydropathy was to go down with me; it was only to be suspended for a single day—the day I spent upon the journey. My portable douche and baths, all, I think, were stowed away in the van, for fear I could get no baths at Ramsgate, everything except the kitchen chair, which I supposed would be procurable anywhere, the article with the wooden seat being, I knew, in universal vogue. Here again I commenced devoting myself to my aquatic remedies, believing, like a fool, that the water-cure would yet do great things for me.

But here, at Ramsgate, provisionally for me, the mystery of my case became at last unravelled, and I was released from the delusion by which I had so long been bound as by a spell. Soon after my arrival I had recourse to one more physician; I should be afraid to affix a number to him, I had consulted so many. I anticipated nothing new from him; but when ill-health has set in, and there is no symptom of amendment, one is glad to consult everybody. And I shall never forget that consultation. After submitting to the same examination with which I had grown so painfully familiar, my new medical adviser remarked, 'There is no disease about you that I can discover; but your case resembles that of one who has had a severe chill. Are you conscious of anything of the kind?'

Not being able to call to mind having suffered from a violent cold at the time my troubles first began, I replied in the negative.

'You are sure you have had no rheumatic affection at any period, say within the last twelve months?'

'Not that I can remember.'

'Well, my impression is, your debility proceeds entirely from the spine. You may perhaps on some occasion have slept in a damp bed, or else you have made a practice of putting on damp linen. I am convinced the spine in your case has somehow been severely chilled. You cannot account for it in any way?'

A strange sensation came over me as he said these words. The truth darted in upon my mind for the first time. I felt all in a glow, while my cheeks became flushed with the surprise of one who has made a startling discovery. The man appeared to perceive it, though I said nothing; for in a tone of eagerness he quickly asked me—

'Why, what—what is the matter?'

'Doctor,' said I, 'I believe you have hit upon the truth, and discovered the source of all my trouble. I have been for months,

and am still, undergoing the cold-water treatment. Since December last I have been at it. Sometimes twice, sometimes thrice daily have I undergone the regimen, ringing changes on the hydropathic roster. I have taken sitz-baths and lamp-baths. I have been packed and douched. Compresses and bandages have been applied to me here and there and everywhere ; added to which, the amount I have taken in in cold potatoes would, I believe, go far to fill a small reservoir.'

He smiled, I suppose a smile of self-satisfaction, and replied, 'Then I do not at all wonder to see you as you are.'

He then proceeded to make some further inquiries, and I went more into a detail of what I had been doing. He was bitter in his condemnation of the lamp-bath ; and further assured me, as many other practitioners have subsequently done, that the practice of sitting in cold water, and allowing cold water to be trickled down the spine, would take the strength out of a Hercules.

'But tell me candidly,' I proceeded, 'what is your opinion as to my recovering my strength? Do you think there is any prospect of the muscles regaining their firmness, so that I may be able to walk as I did formerly?'

'Well, to tell you the truth, you have let matters proceed rather far, and your efforts to induce paralysis of the limbs have been well-nigh successful ; at the same time, I see no reason why you should not recover. You will excuse my speaking more positively. What you have now to do is, of course, to drop the cold-water treatment, and take every means to neutralise its effects upon your frame. I think, for the present, you had better discontinue it even as a beverage, and take three or four glasses of good port wine instead every day. And, if I were you, I would proceed to one or other of the German watering-places, and take a course of the natural warm-baths.'

I think I never paid a fee with so much satisfaction ; for I felt the man was right in his opinion. But, how I blasphemed hydropathy ! How I loathed the very sight of everything connected with the system ! I was far too weak for any act of violence, otherwise it is probable I should have spent half-an-hour or so in giving vent to my exasperation, and smashing-up my whole apparatus, wooden chair included, with the poker. How I now rated myself for my own folly, simpleton that I had been ! I could blame no one else, for I was a free agent, and had yielded to the force only of persuasion.

Yet I was still far from being sanguine of recovery. What,

thought I, could bring back strength to limbs that had once lost it? What possibly could impart firmness to muscles that had once grown flabby? However, I resolved nothing should remain untried which my last adviser had recommended, and I made up my mind to start for some German Bad. Which of them all was it to be? For some days, *Granville on the Waters of Germany* was my study; and after a careful perusal of this work—the only one upon the subject—I came to the conclusion that Wildbad would be the place for me. To Wildbad, accordingly, I hastened; and ere a week had expired I was dipping in its waters. Before doing so, however, I called in one more doctor, a German this time, by name Haussman. I was told it was not safe to bathe without advice. He struck me as being a sensible and intelligent fellow; the only thing he said which shook my faith in his opinion being his confident assertion that I should leave Wildbad quite strong, and able to walk about with ease.

The springs of Wildbad are very warm—considerably, if I mistake not, over the temperature of the blood; yet I was to commence by remaining half-an-hour immersed in them to the chin, increasing by degrees the period of immersion, till I spent a whole hour in the water. I had always held the notion that warm-bathing induced weakness; but this was to give strength! I confess, I went to this new system with some misgiving.

I could, of course, get no port wine; but I strove to console myself with sparkling Moselle instead, which I daresay is every bit as strengthening a beverage for an invalid, whilst many times more refreshing.

I stayed at a hotel where the fare was excellent, though anything but plain; a first-rate *dîner à la Russe* being served up every day, to which I, notwithstanding my infirmities, did ample justice. Here I abode some weeks, bathing, eating, and drinking; thinking all the while what a jolly life this was, if I were only well, though willingly would I have exchanged the Moselle and the French cooking for a mutton-chop and a glass of water, with the strength I formerly enjoyed.

At the end of my first week I found myself no better, nor, indeed, at the expiration of a fortnight; and I was in despair; but when three weeks had passed, I imagined I felt somewhat less exhaustion after trying to take exercise. It might be my fancy; but it encouraged me to persevere, and I did so, and at the end of a few weeks more there were evident symptoms of returning strength.

Yes, I could now manage a mile, and even walk upstairs

without the sensation of lifting a hundredweight at each step. With what delight did I hail these indications of returning strength ! I believed that I had turned the corner, and that my recovery was only a question of time.

And so it proved. I left Wildbad a different man. Health being my sole object, I spent some months in travelling, getting daily better, till I grew quite strong.

All this happened a few years ago, and I know not that I am now any the worse for what I went through. Perhaps I am the better ; for I have learnt from my experience, as a general rule, to avoid playing tricks with my constitution, and in particular to give a wide berth to hydropathy.

BOX AND COX IN THE BAY OF BENGAL;

Or the Indigo Queen.

CHAPTER I.

THERE never was such heat before, and there never could be such heat again, as that which we encountered after leaving Calcutta. Such at least was the profound conviction of everybody on board the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamship Suttee. People in the City of Palaces take to the water as a relief from the land; and the alternative as a general rule is efficacious. But when there is no wind, and the month happens to be May, the change is very apt to be for the worse. In a house, by dint of shutting out light and air—that is to say, letting in about as much of the one as will suffice for the reading of a novel, and as much of the other as can be blown in by a thermantidote through a screen of khuskhus, and raising an additional gale of wind by a vigorous, though I need scarcely say vicarious, exercise of the punkah—you may obtain a negative degree of coolness, and even arrive at a languid version of existence not without its enjoyment. But in a ship you are necessarily more exposed. Your cabin, even though you have one to yourself, is simply insupportable. In the saloon you may get a little air from the punkah. But here there is always a crowd. There are meals for the most part of the day either going on or going off; and when there are not meals there are people who write letters and diaries, and what one would expect to be three-volume novels from the amount of paper they occupy, but which usually turn out to be complaints to the *Times* of the refreshments, and threats to patronise the *Messageries Impériales* instead of the Peninsular and Oriental for the future. Or, even worse than these, you find an occasional official with a grievance, who is brooding over a box of papers, which he assures you in confidence will smash some authority or other in India as soon

as he gets home. His society has not a cooling influence ; and upon every account you betake yourself to the regions above. Here, on the quarter-deck, you may have the shelter of an awning, where the lady-passengers congregate, and in their light and varied costumes form the prettiest of *parterres* ; or you may go for'ards, and not fare perhaps much worse, for you may have a cheroot there, and get the chance of a breath of wind.

We have been delayed in the Hooghly—people are nearly always delayed in the Hooghly for one reason or other—and shall not reach Madras until to-morrow. As a general rule passengers do not become very intimately acquainted at so early a period of the journey home ; but it chances that most of us are old friends and acquaintances, while those who are not among the number seem just as available for companionable purposes as those who are. So, although we have been only three days together, everybody is quite at home, and tired, as a natural consequence, with the monotony of life. And thus it comes about that private theatricals are suggested at an unusually early period.

You would think, from what I have said of the heat, that exertion of any kind was out of the question ; and this is usually the theory of persons who shut themselves up in their houses on shore. But there are bolder spirits, who spurn restraints of the kind. They dread heat, but they dread *ennui* even more. In India they are largely represented by both sexes. They play cricket, or rackets, or croquet, as the case may be, in almost the warmest weather. They drive out to tiffin parties in the day under blazing suns ; and they dance at balls in the evening until in danger of dropping from exhaustion. Their theory is, that when you are once very hot, nothing you do can make you much hotter. This at least is the explanation they give ; but I am inclined to think that in the majority of cases they simply like the fun, and don't care what follows. The men among this class on board ship are always doing something. They are as fresh at breakfast as if they were in Leicestershire in November, and were laying in stores preparatory to a fox-hunt. From the hot bread to the hot coffee, the hot ham and eggs and the hotter curry, to the cool claret and water with which they conclude, nothing comes amiss to them. This is at half-past eight o'clock or so in the morning ; but twelve finds them faithful to lunch, and four equally devoted to dinner ; nor are they often scarce when tea is served at seven ; while they are sure to be particularly plentiful when stronger liquids, consumed

with the assistance of water, are placed upon the table at half-past nine. Indeed, some of their number manage to secure a share of these afterwards on deck, and have convivial little parties, not unaccompanied, it may be, with comic songs. All this seems like an exaggeration of refreshment, and perhaps occasionally is ; but the P. and O. are liberal, and it is felt doubtless a graceful act to meet them half-way.

But eating and drinking is not all that these active men do. They play at quoits with rings of cable contrived for the purpose ; and frivolous youths among them descend even to cockroach races. Lotteries upon the time of our arrival at the next port are a frequent resort ; and a sweepstake for the approaching Derby is also a source of excitement. As for miscellaneous betting, men so disposed will always find opportunity for that ; just as a couple of Americans would manage to 'trade' together if cast naked on a rock. It is rather early in the voyage to start a newspaper, but before we reach Suez we may count upon the appearance of the *Suttee Gazette*—a journal produced in manuscript upon a sheet of foolscap, which will run, say, two numbers, and by that time give such offence by its personality, as to be discontinued by general consent. There are very quiet persons among us, who shun society, and read or write alone in out-of-the-way places. One, who smokes cheroots all day in the fore-castle, and talks to scarcely anybody, is said to be writing poetry. These, however, are the exceptions. The majority are merely killing time, and meeting with more or less success in that sporting pursuit—one, by the way, in which the game must be sought among themselves, as the Overland Route is of course no novelty to any of us, except a few, who, born in India, are going 'home' for the first time.

CHAPTER II.

You may gain from the above some idea of a day on board the *Suttee* ; and one day would have been very much like another but for an element in our society to which it is time to allude. We had a gorgeous collection of ladies on board, and all the chance, therefore, that people have on shore of great events in a small way. There were the usual variety of married ladies with their husbands, married ladies without their husbands, and married ladies who have had husbands and have

them no longer ; but the remarkable feature was a far larger proportion than is usual on the homeward journey of ladies who have never had husbands at all. Of these all were not of course equally conspicuous. In common with the passengers generally, they were very much divided into 'sets.' There were quiet sets, and there were noisy sets ; there were flirting sets, and there were non-flirting sets ; and there were also combinations of these varieties ; for some of the noisy people never flirted, while some of the quiet people flirted a great deal. I should not omit, too, to mention sets who talked about everybody else, and other sets who were especially talked about ; besides persons who did not speak to one another, and other persons who were thought to speak to one another a trifle too much.

You were sure to see most of what I may call the representative people—as far as the ladies were concerned—under the awning on the quarter-deck soon after breakfast ; and it was there that Captain Lightly of the —th Royals, on the day referred to above, betook himself to see a few in whom he was particularly interested. Lightly was a very pleasant fellow, with easy manner, easy good looks, and easy everything, who knew most people on board, for the simple reason that he knew most people on shore, and made the acquaintance of the rest as if by intuition. Before finding his way to the quarter-deck, he remembered that he had promised a photograph to a certain lady, and went to his cabin to get it. On his way back from the bachelors' quarters for'ard, he was stopped by his friend Bridoon, of the —th Light Dragoons (Lancers), who had apparently some matter of importance upon his mind. Bridoon was a very good specimen, in point of appearance, of what a Light Dragoon ought to be ; but he was reserved, and if not shy, certainly lazy, and never troubled himself about society, which he fancied he despised. He had spent his time since leaving Calcutta with very little companionship beyond that of a short pipe, and was understood to look upon ladies as objectionable persons. The latter sentiment was so exactly the reverse of Lightly's way of thinking, that the pair had little in common as far as ordinary intercourse was concerned. So when Bridoon stopped him, Lightly thought he was going to be bored ; but he was too easy to make the fact apparent, and was superficially pleasant upon the shortest notice.

'What's the matter now ?' said he, as if something was always the matter but he did not mind it, and liked being bored rather than otherwise.

‘I want you to tell me about that girl,’ was the somewhat hesitating reply.

‘Girl? What girl? The ship’s full of girls. How should I know whom you mean?’

‘Ah, you know well enough. *The* girl; the strange girl that nobody knew until she came on board.’

Lightly laughed.

‘So you have found her out?’ he said. ‘Well, I’ll tell you who she is. I suppose you have not even heard their name?’

‘No.’

‘Well, her name is Asmanee, and they are indigo-planters; that is to say, her father was an indigo-planter before he died; and she is now supposed to have the pecuniary rewards of indigo-planting in her own right—to what extent, however, is not known.’

‘Never mind. I want you to introduce me.’

‘Well, I usually introduce myself in such cases; but as you please.’

So Lightly took his diffident friend to the *parterre* under the awning: and after a few words and a little flutter, Bridoon found himself sitting by the side of as pretty a flower as a man would wish to wear in the button-hole of his affections.

Pretty, I said—the word should be beautiful. It was beauty, beyond a doubt. There is beauty that trips you up, and beauty that knocks you down. Hers took the sudden and decisive course of action. You could no more mistake its effect than you could mistake a hit from a round shot. Striking, in the ordinary acceptation of the term, would be a mild description of the mode in which it took you by storm; but some such word must be applied to it. Girls you see who are showy, like a shawl or a carpet. She was not that, but was brilliant, as a gem is brilliant—through its light rather than its colour. You need not expect a recitation of details—beauty is not to be catalogued in the manner of an auctioneer—but I may sum up by saying that her style is describable as fair with dark points; that her eyes were azure, and her general effect that of a star.

Bridoon had been three days worshipping her from afar—he who fancied he despised women—and was delighted to find how much pleasanter it was to worship at close quarters. But the realisation of his dream bewildered him; it felt like aspiring all night to a planet, and sitting by its side in the morning, and remarking that it was fine weather. And no planet could look

brighter when spoken to than did Amabel at the smallest remark of this lieutenant of Light Dragoons. She had never known a cavalry man before ; for the military station nearest to her father's factory boasted of nothing but native infantry, with the exception of a battery of artillery, also foot ; and she was so sensible of her inexperience of the world, that she took *omne ignotum pro magnifico* as regarded things in general, her Majesty's forces of course included. She had great reverence for the mounted branch of the service, moreover, because she had read about it a great deal in novels, where its officers were always pictured as superb fellows, irresistible to the other sex, and the conquering heroes of society wherever they went. With regard to intellectual qualities, they were usually represented in a negative character ; so Amabel was not at all surprised at Bridoon's feeble remarks. Stupidity she concluded to be as proper to a cavalry officer as his spurs. She was not at all aware that her companion was a very clever fellow, and that he appeared stupid simply because he was in love. So she was quite interested to hear that he thought India unpleasantly hot at some seasons of the year, but a charming country in others ; that he had seen several parts of it, and had once been in action ; that they had a very pleasant mess ; but he was rather tired of always meeting the same men, and spent a great deal of time in reading. Amabel's part in the conversation was not stupid at all. Her being in love or not would have made no difference in this respect. She had perfect self-possession—the proud way in which her head was placed upon her shoulders would have assured you of this—and all the airs and graces that nothing but high birth and breeding, or the most careful culture in the largest capitals of Europe, are supposed to supply. How such a star ever arose in the Mofussil of Bengal I do not pretend to say. The causes of such phenomena are nature's business, not mine.

The worst thing about Amabel was her mother, a lady of grand physical organisation, but a little Mofussilised in mind ; not too strong in the head, and exhibiting the not unfrequent combination of the utmost apparent good-nature with that appreciation of self-interest which is known in India as 'liking sixteen annas to the rupee.' She had never been in Europe ; but always talked about going 'home.' This affectation once drew from a cynical listener the remark, that she needed only 'eight annas and a hackery' to accomplish the object—the allusion being to the price for which she might hire a native cart to convey her to the nearest bazaar. The sarcasm, by the way, was not quite

appropriate, as the lady, like her husband, was of pure European blood.

The theatricals to which I have alluded were Amabel's suggestion. She insisted, in the spirit of a domineering duchess, that something of the kind ought to be done for her amusement. This was during the first ten minutes of her conversation with Bridoon; and he, delighted to gratify her lightest wish—to have any object with her in common—readily undertook the management of a performance. So, when the mamma, thinking that enough had been done for a first interview, took her daughter away on some feminine errand, he at once set to work to keep his promise.

It was something new for Bridoon, albeit companionable, and even popular, to take an active interest in a proceeding of the kind, and his friends were not slow in ascribing it to the right cause. Lightly, as you may suppose, was especially pleasant on the subject, and wished his friend a success which he did not dream of his obtaining. 'However,' said he, 'the play's the thing for the present; and if we want the play, we'd better get hold of the doctor.'

This was the doctor of the ship, who was a very good amateur, kept a collection of Lacy's acting editions, and was himself ready to take a dozen parts on the shortest notice.

The drama principally patronised afloat is not of the most elevated kind. Serious plays are considered out of the question, and nothing in five acts is likely to find favour. I regret to say that the result of the meeting held upon the subject that afternoon in the fore-castle was a very light and frivolous selection—*Bombastes Furioso* and *Box and Cox*. A special advantage in favour of these pieces, however, was that they could be cast at once without trouble, having been already studied to any extent by the intending performers; so nothing remained but the dresses and the 'mounting,' which are matters easily managed on board ship; and it was arranged that the performance should take place on the first night after leaving Madras.

CHAPTER III.

THE day wore on as days do, and the night arrived with its usual punctuality. Bridoon, with the audacity which belongs

to so many men who are believed to be bashful, followed up his advantage with the 'Indigo Queen,' as the lady of his affections was called by the bold men on board. Except at dinner, where there was a Mede and Persian arrangement as regards seats, he was constantly by her side ; and not only was the daughter delighted, but the mamma smiled upon the intercourse of the evidently happy pair, and marked her approval with the instinct of match-making maternity, by keeping out of their way as much as possible. As they walked up and down the deck in the sunset, occasionally leaning upon the bulwark to watch the red glare reflected in the darkening waves, or pretending to see ships on the horizon, and other objects of interest, you may be sure that they did not escape commentary from their fellow-passengers, some of whom were similarly engaged, while others were seated about in groups, enjoying the witching hour in their own way.

'It looks like a clear case,' said Captain Lightly to the object of his temporary attentions, whom he was escorting upon her evening promenade. 'I didn't think Bridoon had it in him. He is usually so shy of ladies. At Meerut, where we were stationed together, he generally divided himself between books and billiards, with an occasional deviation in favour of private theatricals.'

'But she is *so* pretty,' said his companion, Miss Kutcherri, the judge's daughter, who was pretty herself, and could afford to make the admission ; 'but as for Captain Bridoon—'

'He is only a lieutenant,' interrupted Lightly—military men are always chary of brevet rank being given to their friends.

'Well, *Mr.* Bridoon—I never saw him until this morning, and I cannot say I admire him. He is dull—wants vivacity, I think. You observe that he seems to have very little to say.'

Lightly took this as an implied compliment to himself, as his errands were not on the side of silence ; so he observed that fellows of the kind seldom got on with ladies ; and then, dropping Bridoon abruptly, proceeded to justify his own reputation as a fellow of a very different kind indeed. I suppose his conversation was very amusing, for the lady laughed a great deal, in a pretty, fluttering manner, and when she talked in return, was full of the most engaging superlatives. But she looked with serious interest at the couple whenever they passed in the course of their movements to and fro.

Another pair of promenaders were not quite so favourable in their criticisms. Mrs. Galloper, the widow of Captain Galloper, who had been A.D.C. to the Commander-in-Chief at Bombay,

prided herself upon being a *dame du monde*, who knew European society by heart, looked down upon Indian society, and would never allow that any good could come out of the Mofussil. She was making a fast impression upon young Tapeling, of the Civil Service, her present escort, and criticised Amabel in a desperate spirit of raillery ; when descending to serious commentary, talking of 'her manner as something mysterious, her *ensemble* as wanting in a *je ne sais quoi*,' and so forth. She admitted that she was pretty, however ; but, 'after all, it is only the prettiness that you see in a picture upon a box of bon-bons, which may be very Watteau-ish and so forth, but is only admired by very young and very old men.'

Tapeling, who could not be considered very old, and did not wish to be thought very young, agreed with this worldly sentiment, and remarked that, 'girls who looked like Dresden china ornaments soon got placed upon the shelf.'

In return he was told that he was very clever, but too severe ; so you see the conversation went on just as it ought to do : and Tapeling—thinking exclusively of himself all the time—looked down upon his companion's dark inquiring eyes and pale handsome face—not, however, of the bon-bon order of beauty—and fancied himself half in love with her.

Some of the groups were less charitable still upon the unoffending lovers—who would at least have been unoffending had they not made an unpardonably appropriate pair, and left other people to themselves so as to be disagreeably aggressive.

'I have no patience with her,' said Mrs. Colonel Pommel, as she called herself, to her friend Mrs. Cattle, the wife of a captain in her husband's regiment—the Chillumchee Irregular Horse—with whom she was coming home on leave ; both ladies being what are irreverently designated 'grass-widows.'

'Well, I can't say that,' was the philosophical rejoinder ; 'for I never take any notice of her, never see what she is doing, or who she is talking to ; she may monopolise all the men in the ship as far as I am concerned. But I *do* think,' added the lady with sudden decision, 'that girls of her age who go on in that way ought to be whipped and sent to bed.'

'And if I was her mother—that is to say, supposing I was old enough,' said the elder lady, who was in her second bloom, and wished to make the most of the season—'if I had the control of her, in fact—'

But what the irate lady would do in such a contingency was lost to the world, owing to the sudden appearance of Mrs. Asmanee

herself, who wore that air of triumphant suavity which mammas assume under the conditions which were in so rapid a course of development as regarded her daughter. She was a stranger to the speakers—*they* had taken care of that—but addressed them with charming courtesy, as she was about to seat herself in an adjacent chair.

‘Does this chair belong to your party?’

‘Yes; I am keeping it for a friend,’ returned Mrs. Pommel savagely, drawing the article of furniture suddenly to her side as she spoke.

Mrs. Asmanee was nearly falling upon the deck, but recovering herself, bowed with a sumptuous air of pity, and sailed away. Not quite knowing what else to do, she made a point of catching sight of her daughter by accident, and, bowing graciously to Bridoon, asked if the young lady would not like to go ‘downstairs’ and take some tea?

As if people ever took tea in dreams of love, with a setting sun leaving its last glow upon the ocean!

The empty chair was the cause of some mortification to the grass-widows. A Calcutta friend of theirs—a young merchant of wealth and influence—took possession of it, and with careless ingenuousness began praising the Indigo Queen. He had an idea that the ladies, being married, would not dream of being jealous of her; so he declared his opinion that she was one of the prettiest and most charming girls of his acquaintance. Twilight is very brief in the East, and it was almost too dark to see how his companions received this information; but it is certain that they both suddenly discovered that they wanted tea themselves, and went below to seek that refreshment. Even in the saloon they were not free from annoyance, for Mrs. Asmanee had already descended, and, with Mr. Tapeling and his fair friend of the deck, and a colonel devoted to ladies and cards, had just made up a party at whist.

The deck was now nearly deserted. Indeed the moon which succeeded the sun fell upon little of life except the lovers. It was a new moon—a crescent of promise—and made everything as light as day. The sky was clearer than it had ever been before, and the sea looked grand in its blue depth, with its surface beauties of foam and phosphorescence. There was a fair breeze, which softly cooled the air; the steam was lowered, and the sails unfurled; and the ship went flying through the waters, as though in love with the land, and determined to be in the arms of Madras by the morning.

It was in such a scene as this that the young Lancer, standing by the bulwark with a little white hand within his own, poured forth to its lady owner the utterance of his heart.

When the Indigo Queen descended to the saloon, it was noticed that she looked very serious, but happy as a bird. Her mother saw at once what had happened, and trumped her partner's king in the first moment of exultation.

CHAPTER IV.

At daybreak there was a great rustling of ropes and chains, a trampling upon deck, the noise of many voices in tongues familiar and strange; then there came a sudden shake and a stop. The ship had cast anchor. Looking through the porthole of your cabin, you saw the surf breaking over the flat shore—the higher ground beyond—the white houses, the lighthouse, and the fort. There was no mistaking Madras.

The ardent people, as usual, went on deck at full speed; the indifferent people, as usual, remained below to make full toilettes. Some dashed on shore in haste before breakfast; others proceeded at their leisure after that meal. A few hardened travellers, who had seen everything, did not go on shore at all; a few indolent travellers, who did not care to see anything, also remained on board.

The Indigo Queen was among the dilatory number. She was late in the saloon, not wishing to meet Bridoon in the presence of a crowd. Fortunately there were very few there when she emerged, and she made her way upon deck without being either stared at or talked at. Here were the usual visitors from the land—jugglers, jewellers, and the vendors of red and yellow ices; and there was a whole fleet of Massoolah boats alongside, taking people on shore. Here too was her mother, who kissed her affectionately—as she had been doing from the first thing in the morning—and told her that she should pay a visit to the town as soon as they found a gentleman or two to escort them. Of course there was a gentleman close at hand, and you may guess who he was, and what a pretty meeting took place between the pair. So the three went off together in one of the Massoolah craft, where they were ‘all in the same boat’ as far as being bullied for baksheesh was concerned, and stood a chance of being crushed together in affectionate harmony.

I will not accompany the party on shore, where they spent a hot and, I hope, happy day. During their absence several new passengers came on board, and among them one who was destined to exercise no little influence upon their recently-formed plans. It was by his baggage that the new arrival first became known. The black 'overland' trunks were new, and evidently on their first journey; and they were conspicuously inscribed with the name and style of 'Lord Topham.'

A traveller of rank is always a great object of interest on board ship, especially if he holds no official authority, and may be tuft-hunted by anybody hardy enough to venture on the chase. People who would have no opportunity of knowing him on shore try their utmost to make his acquaintance afloat, and but that he usually has a friend to protect him, his life would be insupportable. On shore he has the world before him wherein to escape from intrusion; but in a ship he is a prisoner, and tries to be civil to everybody in self-defence. Lord Topham's friend was a half-pay captain named Sharp, who, as fortune would have it, had had some acquaintance with Mrs. Asmanee in Calcutta; so he was duly pounced upon by that lady on her return from the shore, as soon as she was extricated from the depths of the boat, and stood in safety upon the deck. At first he was inclined to give her a very cool reception, not considering her quite *bon ton*; but the appearance of the daughter disarmed him, and he could not choose but be cordial.

'And who is this Lord Topham with whom you are travelling?' asked the lady as soon as she could slip in the question edgeways.

Captain Sharp told her that he was the son of the Earl of —, naming a well-known statesman of the day; that he was very young, and unmarried; that he was seeing the world with a view to the completion of his political training; and that immediately upon his arrival at home he was to enter the House of Commons, where he intended upon an early day to bring forward a motion for the reform of nearly everything he had seen in India.

From that moment a new world opened itself to Mrs. Asmanee's imagination. To have a daughter the wife of a baron, who would one day be an earl—a probable cabinet minister, perhaps the premier himself—to 'move' in the highest circles and be caressed by society, to say nothing of having a splendid fortune at command, as every nobleman must have, according to her idea! Such was the picture that presented itself in vivid

colours before the impressionable mind of this model mother. Alnaschar's vision was nothing to it. She had already spurned from her mind's presence the lieutenant of Lancers, with the contempt which his miserable position deserved. Her daughter, indeed, was not going to marry into the barracks, with this splendid prospect before her ! And there could be no doubt of its speedy realisation ; for, as they spoke, his lordship joined the group ; and after making an inquiry of Captain Sharp as to the whereabouts of his despatch-box, caught sight of Amabel, and betrayed evident signs of admiration. He had a pleasant comeliness, which came principally from a fresh and fair complexion, easy open manners, and well-appointed costume ; his general 'form' being authentically London, and conveying the idea, as Mrs. Asmanee afterwards declared, with a profound ignorance of her subject, of 'every inch the nobleman.'

It was not difficult to get an introduction, for his lordship asked the honour on his own account, and once over the conventional bridge was not slow in availing himself of the advantages of the country. So engrossed was he with his new acquaintances, that he had not time to notice the disgusted looks of Bridoon, who, however, had no excuse for quarrelling with anybody, and was obliged to be content with a place in the background, from which, however, he soon took the dignified course of moving off altogether. He was spared the pain therefore of witnessing what followed, that is to say, the appropriation of his *fiancée* by the susceptible lord, who, when the anchor was up and the ship once more under weigh, escorted her up and down the deck precisely as Bridoon had done the night before, and under an even stronger fire of remarks from the amiable groups scattered about.

Mrs. Pommel and Mrs. Cantle were, you may be sure, particularly incensed, though what harm the proceeding did to them it is not easy to see. The former declared her opinion that Amabel was a 'minx,' whatever that may be ; and the latter made the discovery that Lord Topham's family dated no farther back, as far as their nobility was concerned, than the time of Pitt. Miss Kutcherri did not think the young lady so pretty as she had thought her before ; and Mrs. Galloper thought that mysterious 'manner' of hers worse than ever. As for Amabel herself, she was rather frightened than otherwise ; and what made her feel more awkward was that she took it for granted that her new admirer was going through the same course as her old one, and that she would very soon have to make her election

between the two. A cavalry officer had seemed to her yesterday a superior being ; a lord appeared to-day nothing less than an angel. She knew not what she was doing ; but when his lordship proposed to join the people below and play at chess, she acceded as a matter of course. She had an idea that it would be a breach of etiquette to refuse anything to the nobility.

At the table in the saloon the pair were the observed of all observers, and this fact did not restore Amabel's presence of mind. She had a feeling of relief, however, when she found that Bridoon was not present. She could not play at chess, so they tried backgammon ; and the play—in which she regularly lost, I believe also in a spirit of complaisance to rank—lasted until it was time to retire. Once only Bridoon had looked into the saloon. He was very pale, and said nothing. As she met his eye she turned still paler, and could not have spoken for her life. Mrs. Asmanee's triumph may be conceived.

CHAPTER V.

THE next morning Bridoon sought an interview with Amabel, but could not obtain it ; and Mrs. Asmanee, who had become as cold as one of the pink and yellow ices of the day before, would not assist him. As for Amabel, whenever she appeared in public Lord Topham was by her side, and whenever he left her she ran and hid herself in her cabin.

The theatricals were to come off that night. Bridoon had nothing to do in the first piece, but he was to play Cox in the second. Fancy playing Cox in his state of mind ! But men have pride in small matters as well as women, and he had not courage to make a public exposure of his discomfiture. Upon the quarter-deck he saw the stage in process of erection—a raised flooring shut in with canvas, some scenery of general utility, a proscenium made from union jacks, and footlights all in form—appliances and means kept carefully for such occasions. As he heard the hammers going at the woodwork, the cheerful impression came upon him that he had been ordered for execution, and that the men were engaged in putting up the scaffold. However, he made his way to the fore-castle, where the ladies and gentlemen of the company were 'called' for rehearsal. *Bombastes Furioso* had just been got through, and *Box and Cox* was imminent. Mrs. Bouncer was there in the person of Lightly,

who had been used, when an ensign at Meerut, to play young ladies, and could now, as a captain, manage to play a middle-aged female, as his face was bare with the exception of a little hair upon his upper lip, which could be easily powdered into insignificance. The doctor of the ship was to play Box, and he presently appeared, bringing with him the last man in the world whom Bridoon cared to meet, as he had good reason to detest him very thoroughly, but none at all for a formal quarrel. His presence was soon explained. Several passengers were ill : the doctor feared that his attendance would be wanted in the course of the evening ; so he thought it prudent to place Box in other hands. Lord Topham, who had several times played the part at Christmas time at his father's castle, had kindly undertaken it upon this occasion, and he would be quite up to the mark after one rehearsal.

Lord Topham was so frank and pleasant, so utterly unconscious of giving any one offence, that Bridoon was quite disarmed. And, after all, he thought, how am I justified in supposing that he means mischief, and still less that he means any slight to me ? So he met the proffered acquaintanceship half way, as in courtesy bound, and, the freemasonry of society being established between them, entered upon the business in hand with a lighter heart than he had known since they had left Madras.

The rehearsal over, Lord Topham lit a cheeroot, and offered his case to Bridoon. The Lancer would rather have smoked his own or anybody else's cigar, but knew not how to refuse his new friend, whose cordiality was difficult of resistance. So they smoked and talked for a full half hour, found that they had many associations in common, and, in fact, fell naturally into one another's society. It was a bore for Bridoon ; but, as he reflected, what could he do ? The man had only made up to the prettiest girl in the ship, as he had done himself the day before, and had evidently no notion that he was interfering with anybody else.

Bridoon's seat at dinner was a long way from that of Amabel, and Lord Topham's was separated from both. When the repast was over, the Lancer did not deign to approach his betrothed, but determined to let matters develop, as we shall find that they presently did. Amabel had looked very serious all the time that they were at table, and he thought that her brilliant eyes showed traces of tears. I am inclined to think that his conjecture was right ; for I know that people, passing her own and

her mother's cabin not long afterwards, heard distinct manifestations of unwillingness on the one side, and persuasion on the other, as if an elder lady were impressing upon a younger one the necessity of doing something to which the latter was averse; after which came mingled sounds of grief and expostulation. The subject in dispute appeared to be a letter, which the mother was trying to induce the daughter to write.

CHAPTER VI.

It was a brilliant night at the theatre. Seldom had the *parterre* of the Suttée been graced with a more gorgeous assemblage. All available space in front of the proscenium was occupied by all available chairs, and all available chairs were occupied by all available ladies, with cavaliers in agreeable proportion. Above was the clear sky and the crescent moon. The west and the east were bound together in beauty. There was no occasion for the lamps to shine over fair women and brave men, or you may depend upon it they would have done so. Upon the present occasion the auditorium consisted of infinite space, and was light enough for all practical purposes. The only artificial lustre was from the cocoa-nut oil-floats, and similar illumination behind the scenes. Among the distinguished company we especially observed Miss Amabel Asmanee, who occupied a place in the front row, to the intense disgust of some other ladies, who were not equally favoured with conspicuous positions. She sat by her mother's side, and had no loyal knight and true paying his attentions to her as usual. Perhaps that was the reason why she looked so sad.

After an appropriate selection of music from the steward's band, the green-baize curtain rose upon *Bombastes Furioso*. I will draw a veil over that performance, as it was too much like *Bombastes Furioso*, as usually played by amateurs, to call for particular notice. The only characteristic which gave it peculiar distinction was the rich variety of costume, contributed, as far as the male characters were concerned, from different uniforms of her Majesty's service. Thus Bombastes himself wore the jacket of an officer of Hussars, and wonderful boots ornamented with gold, belonging to some regiment of irregular cavalry; while the king wore the scarlet of the Line, and a Highlander's

full-dress cap overburdened with plumes. A novel feature was introduced, too, in the great scene with the boots. Those displayed on the tree were not those worn by that distinguished general, but a pair of ladies' Hessians with tassels in front, so much affected by the 'girl of the period'—an exhibition which caused a great deal of speculation as to their probable ownership.

A few more airs from the steward's band, and the curtain rose upon *Box and Cox*. There was a scream of laughter at the appearance of Bridoon in Cox, whose eccentric costume, one would have thought, could scarcely have been supplied on board. The aspect of Mrs. Bouncer, in the person of Lightly, was a still greater triumph. He had laid some of his fair friends under contribution for the clothes, and had been dressed by no less distinguished hands than those of the grass-widows, Mesdames Pommel and Cantle. He was much more ornate than is proper to Mrs. Bouncer, but the fault was justly regarded as one on the right side. He looked, in fact, a very comely person of thirty or thereabouts, had on a wig nobody knew from whence, and his moustache was so judiciously disguised as not to matter in the least. Lord Topham, in Box, was an equal success; and the way in which he had made up like Mr. Toole was a marvel to all beholders.

The piece, in fact, was a brilliant triumph, up till nearly the close, when some incidents occurred which I must relate in detail.*

When Mrs. Bouncer brought in the letter from Cox's intended wife, Cox took it, according to stage-direction, when the dialogue proceeded in this manner, the words of the play being interpolated with the private remarks of the performers :

Cox. (*Opens letter—starts.*) Goodness gracious ! [Is it you, my lord, who have caused me to be insulted in this manner?]

Box. (*Snatching letter—starts.*) Gracious goodness ! [No, sir ; I know nothing about the letter.]

Cox. (*After reading the letter again.*) He means *your* intended. [You must know something about this.]

Box. No, yours ! However, it's perfectly immaterial ; but she unquestionably *was* yours. [You are making a mistake altogether.]

* It may here be mentioned, for the benefit of Lord Macaulay's New Zealander, that Box and Cox are respectively a hatter and a printer, who occupy the same apartments without being aware of the fact, one being out all day and the other out all night, and that they have both been paying attention to the same widow at Margate.

Cox. How can that be? You proposed to her first. [You must have been aware that the lady was engaged to me.]

Box. Yes. [If you mean Miss Asmanee, I did not propose to her at all.] But then you—now don't let us begin again—go on.

Then, after Cox has finished reading the letter, they went on in this way :

Box. Generous, ill-fated being! [You are under a strange misapprehension.]

Cox. And to think that I tossed up for such a woman! [I shall expect an explanation when this foolery is over.]

Box. When I remember that I staked such a treasure upon the hazard of a die! [You shall have it.]

Cox. I'm sure, Mr. Box, I can't sufficiently thank you for your sympathy. [Simply an insult; and I shall consider it in that light.]

Box. And I'm sure, Mr. Cox, you couldn't feel more if she had been your own intended.

Cox. *If* she had been my own intended! She *was* my own intended! [You must have known of the engagement.]

And so forth. Matters got worse, too, when Mrs. Bouncer came in with the second letter.

Cox. Another trifle from Margate. (*Opens the letter—starts.*) Goodness gracious! [This is too much.]

Box. (*Snatching letter—starts.*) Gracious goodness! [I can only say I know nothing about it.]

The dialogue proceeded in similar style until the incident of the third letter.

Cox. Put it under. (*A letter is put under the door.*) Goodness gracious! [This confirms my suspicions.]

Box. (*Snatching letter.*) Gracious goodness! [This is as surprising to me as yourself. I have been the victim of some imposition.]

But the worst was to come.

Cox. Box. [I have had no hand in this.]

Box. Cox. (*About to embrace. Box stops, seizes Cox's hand, and looks eagerly in his face.*) You'll excuse the apparent insanity of the remark; but the more I look at you, the more I'm convinced that you are my long-lost brother. [This is infernally ridiculous.]

Cox. The very observation I was going to make to you. [Yes, and I believe you are the cause.]

Box. Ah! Tell me—in mercy tell me—have you such a

thing as a strawberry mark on your left arm? [This is too absurd.]

Cox. No! [I'm glad the thing's just over.]

Box. Then it is he! (*They rush into each other's arms.*)

The embrace was so fervent as to considerably astonish the audience, who had fancied that something must be the matter, especially those in front, who caught a few words now and then in addition to the regular dialogue; and Cox, it was observed, seemed to be laying violent hands upon his particular friend, to the extent, at least, of giving him something very like a shaking. This did not last more than a minute. Box extricated himself from Cox's grasp, and the remaining few words on either side were got over nobody knew how.

As soon as the curtain fell, an explanation ensued.

'Once for all, Lord Topham,' asked Bridoon, 'was it at your instigation, or with your knowledge, that those letters were written to me, and delivered upon the stage?'

'I give you my honour, no,' was the answer; 'and I might ask *you* the same question concerning the third letter, addressed to myself, and also delivered on the stage.'

Of this Bridoon, in his turn, denied all knowledge.

'All I know,' interposed Lightly, 'is that I found them in the pocket of my—my dress,' he added, glancing at his feminine apparel. Then seized with an idea, he added, 'Mrs. Pommel and Mrs. Cantle looked after my get-up, and Mrs. Pommel gave me the letters, which I supposed to be dummies, to deliver in the course of my part. If they gave me real letters instead of false ones, it is not my fault.'

'Do you know,' asked Bridoon, 'what the letters contained?'

'Certainly not,' was the answer. 'I thought they contained nothing at all.'

What the letters *did* contain was very simple. The first, addressed to Bridoon, was from Mrs. Asmanee, and informed him that, for family reasons to which she need not more particularly allude, she must withdraw her implied consent to Mr. Bridoon's marriage with her daughter, and that she hoped, therefore, that he would not address that young lady for the future except as an ordinary acquaintance. The second, also addressed to Bridoon, was from the young lady herself, informing him that her feelings had changed towards him, and that she must ask him to release her from her imprudent promise; she would always respect him as a friend, and desired that he would not regard her in any other light. The third letter, from Mrs. Asmanee,

and addressed to Lord Topham, informed his lordship that his attentions to her daughter having been such as to render a formal declaration on his part unnecessary, she had much pleasure in assuring him of the satisfaction with which she would receive him as a son-in-law ; adding that she need not make any addition on the part of her daughter, as he must be fully aware of the feeling of that young lady towards himself.

These interesting missives, it subsequently appeared, had been taken by Mrs. Pommel from Mrs. Asmance's Indian ayah, who had been told by her mistress to leave them in the cabins of their respective addresses ; and the two grass-widows, suspecting that some mischief would ensue, had taken measures to make Lightly deliver them on the stage.

There was, of course, no quarrel between Topham and Bridoon. Topham had no intentions, nor any intention of having any. With Bridoon it was different—poor fellow, *he* had been in earnest. He never spoke to Amabel again. Indeed she gave him no opportunity, but shut herself up in her cabin, thoroughly ashamed of the part she had been weak enough to play. Mrs. Asmance was furious with Topham for not responding to her advances, and still more furious with herself when, upon looking over some English newspapers at Point de Galle (where Topham and Bridoon both left the ship), she read a paragraph to this effect :

‘The Martingale peerage, by the death of the late lord, descends to his nephew, Mr. Bridoon, a lieutenant in the —th Light Dragoons (Lancers), who also inherits the large family estates.’ There were some further particulars, but these were quite enough to induce mortification of no common order.

I asked Bridoon, after his arrival in England, when the news first reached him.

‘I knew of it,’ he answered, ‘before I left Calcutta, but did not want to be bored during the journey. I could see I was thrown over on account of Topham’s rank, and was, of course, the less likely on that account to tell my own.’

I was glad to see that he was recovering from his disappointment. I saw the Indigo Queen a year afterwards at Baden-Baden. She was still looking like a star, but not so bright a star as when on board the Suttee. She was not then married ; but her mother was trying hard at an Italian Court.

HOW VIOLET GOT A BEAU.

CHAPTER I. IN THE VALLEY.

DEAR little Violet! They must have known the colour of her eyes before they chose her name. Poor little Violet! Her mother had died years before we knew her; then there came a stepmother, one of the old-fashioned stepmothers, strict and exacting, caring much for her own sons, and little for the lonely daughter of her new home. Second mammas, in these days, if we are to believe modern fiction, exceed in love and tenderness all other women; but Mrs. Ashley belonged to an earlier part of this world's history. She had no soft place in her heart for that tender, violet-eyed, motherless child; perhaps even a twinge of jealousy because Mr. Ashley loved her so well.

Mr. Ashley, in time, learned to repress his feelings, knowing that, if noted, they only brought trouble upon his darling. He was naturally of a reserved, peace-loving disposition, and eventually schooled himself into perfect quiescence. Thus there arose a barrier between him and his lone child, too. All this ended by her throwing her little foolish, love-burdened heart at the feet of a certain penniless young German, who gave daily lessons to her stepbrothers and herself. Mr. Otto behaved honourably; he liked the child well enough, and he found out her queer little secret one day quite by chance. She had written no end of poems about it and him. Instead of taking advantage of his discovery, Otto imparted it to her father. Then Mr. Ashley came to us for help.

Will and I had a private consultation; then I drove over to Harley-street, and brought Violet away to our cosy home. She was a sweet little soul, but half-frightened, and quite at a loss in her new surroundings. I had seen her now and then, but knew nothing of her; my visits to Harley-street were of the

most formal. Friendship there was only between the gentlemen of the families. Will and Mr. Ashley had been schoolfellows once upon a time. Violet sat in the phaeton beside me, very grave and silent.

'Do you like driving?' I asked, whipping my ponies well together. We were out on the high road now, speeding homewards.

'Yes, thank you, I like it very much,' she said demurely.

'This sort of talk won't do,' I thought; 'we must come to a better understanding, in some way. I must win her confidence: after that we shall get on.' So I turned and looked into her pretty face.

'Violet,' I said, 'have you ever thought anything at all about me?'

'Yes, often, because I liked you.'

'That was kind. If you thought about me, and liked me, did you ever pity me?'

'Pity you, Mrs. Bell! No, certainly not. Why ever should I?'

She was puzzled and somewhat interested. I did not answer, and presently she spoke her thoughts aloud.

'You have carriages and horses and a beautiful house, and you can do just whatever you like, and—and—you have a husband who is good to you, and whom you love—why ever should I pity you?'

'You seem quite sure about my loving my husband.'

'Of course you do—any one can see that; besides, he is so nice, you know, you couldn't help it.'

The little maid was getting quite cheerful now, and spoke in a chirpy, pert way that I thought delightful.

'Well,' I said, 'that being settled between us, and granting all your ideas of my possessions to be correct, I think you would pity me if you knew how I have wished for something for years and years, and it has been denied to me.'

Violet said 'O!' and she made her eyes and her little mouth quite round to suit the letter and the astonishment it conveyed. We were crossing the bridge now, and one of the ponies was troublesome, so a little time went by before I asked:

'Do you know what I have wanted so long, my dear?'

'I think so. Some one to call you mamma, and to be your own, own, own pet, and Mr. Bell's too. Is that what you mean?'

'Yes. Now you know my trouble: I know yours too, Violet, and am sorry for you, and I think we can do one another

good. That is why I asked you to come and stay with me. Do you know what we are going to do together?

‘To read, and work, and drive, do you mean?’

‘Something nicer than that. To travel.’

‘O, Mrs. Bell! and am I to go too?’

‘Yes, indeed. You are going to be our great pet, I can see, and shall do anything and everything you like. This day week we are going abroad together; your papa knows all about it, and is quite willing.’

That day week, accordingly, saw us leave London; and after a glimpse of Paris, very hot and dusty, but not the less amazing to our little *protégée*, we went on to Spa. It was very early, long before the Spa season, when we first arrived; but we purposed spending three or four months there, and found June sunshine sweet and pleasant. Nor was there any heat to complain of in the long midsummer days that we spent in the woods there abounding.

What a sweet little nest is that Spa! What delightful walks, and rides, and drives! What glorious breeze and view from the heights, and what pleasant winding paths up to them! How pretty, too, is the one gaily busy street, and the glorious avenue into which it spreads, when its attractions are at an end! Its principal feature is the Redoute (now superseded by a far handsomer building further down). Opposite that centre of attraction, cunningly placed indeed for him who has won, or for those desirous to lose, crowd the shops of banker, tobacconist, hairdresser, ladies’ fashions, jeweller, and, specially tempting, the repositories for stained and painted wood articles peculiar to the place. Thus the fortunate winner, sauntering out of the Rooms, is tempted in every possible way to invest a portion of his hoard; while the banker will, for a consideration, change any kind of money under the sun into five-franc pieces, to enable any unfortunate speculator to go and try again. One end of the queer little street leads into the much-sought avenue, as I have said; the other opens upon the miniature market-place and town-hall.

Violet was very much amused by the men in big blouses who stand in the square from morning till night. Some are guides, others possess carriages or saddle-horses, at service of excursionists; others, again, simply stand there looking on, smoking long pipes, and making slow observations upon all going on around them. Violet’s naïve expressions of astonishment and delight were a kind of continual feast to Will and me; and the child soon became quite familiar and at her ease with us two old people.

We must have seemed so very ancient to her! We were staying at the Hôtel d'Orange, and had spent a quiet happy month, when some friends arrived, whose coming brought about various little adventures that have led me into this telling of Violet's proceedings. She had by no means forgotten Mr. Otto, and in confidential moments would tell me of his perfection and her admiration.

'O! I did like him so very, very much,' she said one day; 'so would you, if you knew him. He is very handsome, you know; bright blue eyes, and such a beautiful moustache! Then he used to be so patient and kind to me, and I did love to hear him talk. At last I could not bear to be away from him,—I used to cry and feel so wretched. At least, not really wretched, you know, but such a nice, new, strange feeling. You know I have read all about being in love. And when he came it used to make me start, and when he touched me I used to tremble. But now it is all over, quite over. He laughed at me! It was very cruel. You know he found my book of verses, and Otto was so difficult to rhyme to. Ah! Mrs. Bell, I never could have stayed on at home; and I am so thankful you took me away. I dreaded coming at first, though.'

We had walked up to one of the famous wells to breakfast—the Sauvinière, that boasts of a greater attraction than its mineral spring. We had taken our meal out under the fine old trees, and found the côtelettes and omelettes well deserving of their wide-spread fame. My old gentleman had walked away with his cigar, and we two were still sitting in lazy enjoyment, very cosy and confidential. There now drove up to the inn-door a queer old rumbly-tumbly chariot, drawn by two small Spa horses, belonging decidedly to the aboriginal species common there. I looked on in the contented apathetic way in which people resting at ease generally watch the movements of active travellers.

Out of the nondescript vehicle sprang briskly a bright-faced, laughing youth, with an unusual quantity of thickly-curling hair, which I noticed all the more because in jumping he lost his hat. Him followed, more soberly, a somewhat older man, who impressed me by his composed manner.

'He looks like the light-haired one's schoolmaster,' whispered Violet.

The merry youth ran after his hat, and the other stepped back to the chaise, and held out both hands to help a lady in the difficult descent. She was a very tall, broad-shouldered person of middle age, and had about her an air of severe propriety. This expression went into all the details of her sad-coloured

attire ; her very bonnet-strings were cut into rigidly-straight lines at the end, and the tips of her stiffly-extended fingers were clothed in square-cut gloves. I do not say that I discovered such details in these first moments, but they came to be so associated in my mind with Miss Prudence Herbert, that I cannot speak of her without noting them.

Last, but by no means least, there came forth a very imposing gentleman, with a grand face and air, and a long silvery beard. All my apathy was at an end : I started to my feet and approached the strangers. Certainly, there could be no doubt, this was our dear old friend the General. I had been telling of him and his brave deeds but yesterday. Then I spoke of him as though there were thousands of miles between us, now he was here ! I had seen him last twenty years ago, yet I knew him again instantly. He was a gallant young captain then, and had stood in my dead father's place when I became Will's wife. Then I bade him a long farewell, but I had heard of him ever since ; first from his wife ; then from mutual friends ; once or twice from himself. I met him now with outstretched hands. He gave me a kiss, and said I looked just as young as when he left home. Then he turned, in his courteous way, towards little Violet, who had crept up with her eyes full of curious questions.

'And this fairy ?' said the General ; 'surely I should have heard—I cannot have forgotten ?'

'No, she is not ours,' I answered cheerfully. I saw our old friend was distressed by having spoken his surmise. 'But she is a dear pet, and we are taking care of her.'

'Very pleasant care you find it, Missey, I should say. And where is Mr. Bell ?'

He came up at the moment. Then there was much introducing. Miss Herbert was the General's sister-in-law, and had met him at Southampton with his younger sons.

'Miss Violet took you for your brother's schoolmaster,' I said, at this part of the introduction ; on which poor little Violet emulated the deepest-dyed rose with her blushes, and when we were alone scolded me well for being so very, very wicked.

The elder had gone out to his father some years before, and had just returned from Canada with him. So these great fellows were the babies I had cooed and crowed with ; and this fair-haired, laughing Lionel was the chubby cherub that had rivalled even Will in my affections and attentions ; and he was the elder, after all ! I fancied I could detect some of the aunt's schooling in grave Herbert, who was certainly very solemn for

his years. A very handsome fellow, now that I looked more closely at him, and much more like his father than my old pet, Lion. Whether from old association, or for the sake of his laughing face and merry way, I don't know, certain it is that Lion immediately regained his hold on my affections, and that I was as enthusiastic in his praises as Violet herself, in whose thoughts he quickly usurped the place of Mr. Otto. Pray do not think that Violet was giddy or heartless; far, far from it; the little soul was all love, and had given of her tenderness to the very first man whom she could justly admire. It was only a child's feeling then; now, I thought, or came to think shortly, the woman was arising, and the child passing away.

I said to Will, when we were alone after that meeting at the Sauvinière, that between Lionel and Violet had arisen a case of love at first sight; Lionel's admiration had been so plainly visible in his delighted face, and in his cheery words, when he took Violet's hand in his. Then again, when we all went to the well, and Violet had been persuaded to put her foot into the legendary hollow stone, and wish, it was Lion who held her hand to steady her; and he chatted all the time. He said how he wished that *he* might wish; and would not she wish his wish for him? 'I must not wish my wish myself,' he added; 'don't you know that we men are not to have any extra chance of fulfilment given to us, like you of the privileged sex? Well, I grant you any and every privilege under the sun cheerfully.'

At this Violet put on her little pert pout, and replied—

'No doubt the saints won't give men any encouragement, because they are unreasonable in their desires, and don't deserve to have them fulfilled.'

'I don't know about the reason; but I do know about the strength and good-will of *my* desires. Perhaps some day I will tell you, and let you judge for yourself.'

I can see all the pretty picture before me still.

Glimpses of very blue sky and fleecy floating cloudlets, through the rich foliage overhead, fantastic shadows swaying on the sward beneath, balmy air all about us. The brave old General opposite, leaning on his younger son's arm; Aunt Prudence a little further back, holding the glass of disagreeable water at stiff arm's-length; my dear Will persuading her, in his droll way, to try its salutary effects. Then—between them all and me, and some steps below us—Violet, as lovely a type of maidenhood as I have ever had the good fortune to see. Her arched brows raised, her sweet lips parted in a smile of protest, her long soft

curls taken off the smooth brow, and falling gracefully over her shoulders, and her trusting look and hand given child-like to the care of her bright-faced companion; her whole attitude—even the soft blue folds of her muslin dress—adding to the inexplicable charm that an innocent girl has in the eyes of all beholders. Of course Lionel had his share in the making of the pretty picture. His merry face and strong figure; his tawny—I was going to say mane, and it would be correct—well then, his tawny mane and beard, and the admiring interest with which he regarded ‘the child of wishes,’ as he talked his nonsense,—all these things impressed themselves on my mind’s eye, and enable me to-day to give you a faint idea of a bygone, but very brilliant reality.

The meeting of that morning made a new era in our Spa life. Where we three had formerly gone, there were now mostly seven of us, and many happy days we spent together. As for Violet, what with sunshine, happiness, and love, she was growing absolutely beautiful: so I saw, and needed not the constant telling of the two old gentlemen, whom I voted far more impressionable than the young ones. As for the General, he put himself entirely at Miss Violet’s feet, and led her away into an enthusiastic flirtation, which often called for my severest criticism as chaperone. Lionel’s admiration was evident enough; but Herbert seemed to heed the child’s loveliness as little as Aunt Prue; but then Herbert was altogether so quiet and unimpressionable. With his godmother, Miss Herbert, I had to fight many small battles about the liberty granted to the young people in the disposal of their time and the choice of their amusements, especially on the occasion of a particularly nice ball. Lionel had entreated so for Violet’s *début* at this entertainment, that I at last yielded.

‘You give way to the young people too much—far too much,’ said Aunt Prue severely. ‘The idea of encouraging—I may say, leading them on to think of nothing but pleasure appears to me almost sinful. Surely we were not sent into the world on such account. Life has sterner thoughts and duties.’

‘But we are here for the holidays.’

‘I greatly fear, Mrs. Bell, you would have all the days of the year devoted to dances and junketings, and leave none for sober works. I cannot but say that the idea of this ball is extremely distasteful to me, and I misdoubt me much that the effect of such dissipation will not tend to the improvement of the youthful minds of which we have undertaken the charge.’

‘I am so sorry you don’t approve. We must not dis-

appoint them now ; Violet and Lion have quite set their hearts upon it.'

'There, my dear madam, you put my worst fears into words. As for my beloved Herbert, I shall certainly exert *my* influence in withholding him from these thoughtless pastimes.'

And so on, and on. My bluff old Will voted Miss Prudence a bore, and a muff, and all sorts of naughty names ; but I knew that, though fussy in words, she was always ready for a kind or generous action. This much-debated ball was the first 'select' one of the Spa season, and it had been settled that we should all go. As for Miss Herbert and her godson, of course we should miss them ; but they were not absolutely indispensable. I had dressed my little Violet in snow-white, and crowned and garlanded her with silvery leaves. Over her curls, too, I had shaken a silvery shower, and Will had, with some difficulty, procured corresponding ornaments for her neck and arms. I thought her perfection, and kissed the laughing lips with—I think—almost a mother's pride. Will led our pet into the room, while I leant upon the General's arm. Lionel, tired of waiting, had gone on ; but in the pretty rooms we looked for him in vain. He had claimed Violet's promise for the first two dances.

'I want to get her well used to the slippery floor and the size of the rooms, you know,' he had said, half apologetically. When I looked on her now, I thought the dear boy needed no excuse. But where was he, and why did he not gladden his eyes with the sight of our fairy ? Meanwhile Herbert was leading her away. He had been standing half-hidden behind one of the pillars near the entrance, and I caught sight of his watchful eyes as we came in. But he did not join us until the music began, and Violet looked on with a wistful disappointment. She rewarded her unexpected cavalier with a beaming smile, and was swiftly carried away amongst the dancers, while we elders looked on.

'How well the lad dances !' said the General ; 'upon my word I did not expect it of him.'

'Such a partner would put life into any man,' said Will. 'I am going to have a turn myself presently.'

The next quadrille saw Mr. Bell and Violet standing together, with Herbert and me as *vis-à-vis*. Then I felt almost thankful that Miss Prudence was not looking on. Of course we had all wondered—first privately, then to one another—as to what had become of Lionel. At last I became uneasy, and de-

puted Herbert to go and seek his brother, and not to return without him.

‘Do you really not know what keeps him, Mrs. Bell?’ he asked, looking straight into my eyes.

‘No, indeed; do you? I am anxious because he was dressed and waiting, and said he would come on here. Do you know?’ But Herbert was gone before he had time to reply: he had muttered, ‘I will find him,’ and had drawn his brows somewhat sternly, I thought; but then Herbert was so peculiar, and might have meant nothing.

We had met some English friends, and we had made some foreign ones, during our stay, and Violet had more dancing offers than she could accept. There was a certain Mons. Déjazet, who had put his heart verbally at her feet and at my feet all the evening, and who was excited by *cette beauté virginale* to a frantic pitch of gesticulation. The little man looked altogether like a lively note of admiration. He capered and figured about our pet, and brought her *rafraichissements* innumerable. She took all his attentions in excellent part, and was grateful and amused. Before we left Spa, Mons. Déjazet had demanded our permission to pay his addresses to *cette charmante jeune personne* Mees Vi—o—lé. I made some allusion to her about her French suitor, and her answers were quite sufficient to warrant Mr. Bell in humbly declining the proffered honour. Mons. Déjazet, with his *cinquanté mille livres de rentes*, was astounded, and went his way in wonder, but in peace.

Herbert soon came back to the ball-room. ‘Lionel will follow me directly,’ he said, and gave his impatient partner his arm. A few minutes later our truant appeared, waltzing away with a certain Miss Noble. That dance over, he came to me.

‘I am so sorry, Mrs. Bell; I really could not help it. I quite intended to come straight here, but was detained, and seeing me come in, Mr. Noble begged me to dance with his daughter, so I could not come straight to you. Where is our sweet Violet?’

‘There is *my* sweet Violet,’ I said, a little coolly; ‘and she is enjoying herself amazingly.’ Then I looked well into his face. ‘You are strangely flushed, Lionel, after one dance.’

‘Am I?’ he said, and bit his lip; ‘I am very warm.’

‘You can rest at your leisure now.’

‘No, by Jove! I am going to claim that darling, and make up for lost time.’ Just then he saw her standing opposite. ‘O, Mrs. Bell, how delicious she looks to-night!’

But Violet did not come over to our part of the room, as he

had expected, and as soon as the music began again, whirled by with Mons. Déjazet.

‘I can’t stand this,’ muttered Lionel, and hotter blood came into his face. He left me, and watched his opportunity; with the last chord he lifted Violet’s hand in his, and walked her off, unceremoniously. They went into the further room; I followed swiftly, and was in time to hear him say—

‘But you must not, must not be angry with me; I am so savage with myself.’

‘But, Lionel, I will know what kept you. Tell me; then I will forgive you and dance with you again.’

‘O, do! Dance pretty with me, and don’t pout and look so bewitching, or you’ll make me say more than I ought.’

‘You must tell me first, sir.’

‘I cannot tell you first or last, miss.’

‘Then I will not dance, at least not with you. It was worth Herbert’s while to come to me.’

‘He is such a calm chap, nothing tempts him.’

‘Maybe I was sufficient temptation.’

‘O, you daughter of Eve!’

‘Don’t abuse my dear first mother, sir. I never will acknowledge that she was so much to be blamed as people make out. Why did not Master Adam sensibly and kindly point out to her the error of her ways? She might have been led aright, with very little trouble.’

‘In your opinion, then, Adam should have reasoned with— with a woman. Poor logic! sad would have been thy early fate.’

‘Now you are talking nonsense, and only to lead me away from the questions I WILL have answered. What kept you, Lionel?’

‘Will you come and see?’

‘Nothing I should like better.’

‘Come, then.’

‘O! what can it be? Would Mrs. Bell let me, do you think?’

‘Never mind Mrs. Bell. Trust yourself to me. I love you, sweet little Violet, and mean to make you my wife some day. Come with me now.’

She looked straight into his face for a moment, then gave a low laugh.

‘I will come with you now,’ she said, ‘for the fun of the thing, and because I am curious; but as to that other proposal of yours, I have nothing to say to that.’ She had a very deter-

mined, quiet air when she chose, and now said her words so resolutely, that they startled me. Lionel laughed aloud.

‘Time will prove, my dear, and I can wait. We must fetch your cloak, and muffle you up well. Now, you can come.’

I, very near them, though hidden, had heard much of what passed, and now resolved to follow. I had no longer any doubts as to where our pet was to be taken. I left them to go their own way, while I went back to my husband and whispered hurriedly to him. Then I put my shawl over my head, went back to the hotel, fetched a bonnet and veil, and rejoined Mr. Bell at the entrance of the Rooms.

CHAPTER II. ON THE HEIGHTS.

WHEN I put my hand upon my husband’s arm we walked up the stairs, but did not go amongst the dancers this time. We went into a lofty, well-lighted saloon, in the centre of which stood a crowd. That it was an eager anxious crowd was my first observation; the next, its strange component parts. I had seen such places before; I had watched the green table of danger with its weird numbers; I had heard the monotonous call of the croupiers, and watched them raking up the lost money. But I had never looked with such intense interest on all these things as now, on this night, when I wished to note the effect upon our darling and her admirer. By this time we had all begun to think of them as belonging together. Their suitability had been beyond doubt from the first. Age, faces, and fortunes would be well mated; so we wise elders had agreed. A little to our right they now stood, far too much engrossed by the gambling operations to heed us. Now and again Violet would turn with inquiring look or word to her protector, to whom she clung timorously, then back to the table and those nearest and most interested. Her lips were parted, and all her powers of keen observation shining from her wondering eyes. Lionel had not forgotten her presence, but his thoughts were chiefly with the game playing before him. Mechanically his hand moved towards his pocket, and he brought forth small gold coins.

‘I must try again,’ he said; ‘your presence must change my luck. Do choose me a number from amongst those marked upon the table; do. Only mention one, just one.’

‘Is it wrong, Lionel?’

'No, no; very kind; quite right.'

'Thirty-six,' said Violet, and Lionel hurriedly pushed three ten-franc pieces upon the chosen number.

In another minute thirty-six times that sum lay awaiting him.

'Shall I leave it?' he asked.

'No, no, take it; take yours—anything. But come away, please, come away,' said Violet, not in the least understanding the transaction, but quite aware of the hungry and envious eyes that followed the money as it came back into her companion's hand. And then the eyes were turned upon her, and I could see the blood mounting painfully into her very temples. Some of the eyes so attracted were not speedily withdrawn. One swarthy black-bearded man, with eyes like a hawk, rose, and invited our pet by look and gesture to take his chair.

'Mees has all the favour of ze god-like Fortuna,' he said, grinning.

'Do sit, Violet; you will not be noticed so much; do, there's a dear girl, and tell me what to play.'

'I shall unite to your ventures,' said the foreigner, evidently understanding the purport, though not the words, of Lionel's entreaty. And he backed quite out, and offered his chair to our poor confused pet. I was just coming to the rescue, when Herbert (who had a knack of appearing at the right moment on this evening) stepped forward.

'You have forgotten that I was to have the last waltz, Violet,' he said. 'I have been seeking you; come.' He took her unresisting hand; gave his brother, who was about to interfere, a look that Will called a 'silencer;' and led her away. They did not go back into the ball-room. When I reached the hotel, I found my pet in tears.

'You are over-excited, my darling,' I said, and began to take off her ornaments.

'I am in such trouble, I don't know how to tell you. Will you ever forgive me?'

'Dear child, you have done no harm.'

'Do you know, do you really?'

'Yes; I was there, watching you. We quite intended to show you the Rooms some evening, and Mr. Bell would have explained the game to you. There was no harm in your going; but Lionel was to blame for taking you in your ball-dress.'

After this the little soul sobbed all the more. I put her into her bed and sat beside her, holding her trusting little hand in

mine, until her breathing became regular, the tears dried on her face, and she slept. Perhaps another tear fell upon it as I kissed her; but I know that I thanked God for his mercies and for the beauty and brightness in this pleasant world.

I am sorry to have to tell you that my old favourite, Lionel, did not behave himself very well during the next month. Miss Prue was in a state as nearly bordering on distraction as propriety allowed her.

'The young man must have his fling,' said the kind General; 'he has never seen anything of the sort before. He'll soon come straight again. Don't worry him, Prue; he is a good lad.'

'Worry him! What expressions, brother! Counsel, advice, are now to be spoken of as men speak of—of aggressive dogs. Worry, indeed!'

At last, however, things were getting too bad. Lionel took his seat at the green table as soon as the doors were opened, and scarcely left it again until they closed for the night. We all besought the General to interfere.

'Our little plans for Violet will all be ruined by his present thoughtlessness,' I urged. Then the father told his son he must either give his word not to reënter the gambling saloon, or return with them all to England, and at once. Lionel chose the former alternative. He must have felt grateful to his father, who had allowed him to run on in his own way, and given him all necessary moneys without a word of complaint, until a check was absolutely necessary. So Lion acquiesced with a good grace, and now sought to pass his time, and forget his craving for play, in a fresh burst of love-making. But in Violet there was a change that chilled these thoughts of his. She did not turn from her merry-faced friend: that might have augured hope in the winning her back; but she met him without any of her wonted interest and sprightliness. She did not care if he came, stayed, or went. She did not mind walking with him, but she showed neither liking nor disinclination when such walking was proposed. We all saw the change, and I acknowledged that I had been hasty, and that the woman's feeling still slumbered in the little breast.

'Perhaps she will never care for any one,' said Will. 'This is the second lover in six months.'

'She has never been beloved yet,' I answered, fearing to say more, as I had been so manifestly wrong in my former ideas. My husband shook his head.

'You are very queer creatures, you women; very queer, and

not to be sounded at all. You're either too shallow or too deep, it's not for me to say which. How some girls would have clung to that handsome young fellow, all the more pertinaciously just because he was thoughtless and foolhardy, and turned his back upon them a bit, and hankered after forbidden pleasures !

'That would have been so, if a girl—if Violet had loved him. But, indeed, matters went too fast and too smoothly; we might have been sure they could not all end in rose-colour.'

'The old theory about its being unfortunate to win the first rubber? Cards and love have something in common.'

'Have they, though? Then I will thank you for some information about—'

But that led us on to another subject, with which Violet has nothing to do. That young person was altogether in a somewhat contradictory and unsatisfactory frame of mind for weeks after the ball at the Redoute. She made desperate love to the dear old General, and turned her back, as Will says, on all her other friends. I never found out what passed between her and Herbert when he led her home on that eventful night; but I know that she shunned him, could not be induced to take a walk with him alone, and scarcely answered if he spoke to her. And yet I caught her eyes earnestly fixed upon his face sometimes, and I knew that she heard, ay, and eagerly listened to, the few words he spoke. He was not much with us; he liked walking, and would often start away with his knapsack on his back for two or three days' tour.

October was coming upon us now, and we began to speak of going home. I had resolved that nothing but absolute necessity—or a good husband—should take our darling from us again. She was such a blessing and comfort, and so constantly reminded us, by her very name even, of spring and sunshine, and all that is sweet and pure in Nature's day of promise.

How long might she be with us? I thought. I held a letter from Mr. Ashley in my hands. I had told him my wishes and opinions honestly, and he had responded with all possible kindness. *He* would not take her away. How about that handsome lover with the tawny mane?

We elders were sitting out in the beautiful avenue, listening to the energetic band, and the two in my thoughts were walking leisurely up and down. Lionel's arm had been offered and rejected, and he had folded his hands upon his back. Violet, a little pouting, a little trifling, wholly charming, toyed with her parasol, looked provokingly into his face, and gave him pert

answers in her own pert way. At last he grew impatient of her nonsense, and must—I judge from later confessions—have said something like—

‘You are making fun of me, Violet. I am in earnest, and will not be laughed at. I tell you plainly, once for all, I love you, and want you to be my wife. I am tired of all this play. Let there be an end to it.’

‘I don’t think I made the beginning.’

‘You did. I thought you beautiful that very first day, when I placed your little foot in the wishing-place. I wished *then* that you might have put it upon my neck instead, and called me your slave. I would have done your bidding fast enough.’

‘Now you know me better, you want me to do yours. Thanks; I don’t care about a master at present.’

And she laughed merrily enough. Then he stood still, fronting her.

‘Violet,’ he said, ‘I ask you, for the last time, will you be my wife? I know Mrs. Bell would like it; so would my father: he wants me settled; and surely your father could not object. Violet, may we write and ask him?’

‘No!’ she said; and I saw her plant her foot and parasol firmly down into the ground. ‘No, no, no!—ten thousand times, no! And I tell you, Lionel, you will never change me; not if you worry me all the few days we stay together, you will never change me. I don’t love you, and I don’t love Mr. Otto, though you have picked up that silly story, and choose to say so, and—and—and—I don’t think I know what love is, and—and—I don’t wish to—there!’

‘Let me teach you. I can, and will.’

‘From you I could never learn it. Let us be friends. Shake hands, and have done with this nonsense, once for all.’

Of course he would not shake hands, but went away from her with hasty and angry steps.

She told it all to me afterwards, and silenced all comments or eulogy.

‘Dearest and kindest of mothers—and you do seem to me like a mother,’ she said, with her eyes full of tears, ‘you love me, and you love dear Mr. Bell, and you know how nice that is, and we are all so happy. Let us go on so. I am sorry if he cares for me: I know it won’t last; but I do assure you I can never care for him, in the right way, you know.’ And she would say no further word in the matter.

After that walk Lionel did not come near her. He was a

somewhat spoilt and vain young man, and his vanity had received a smarting blow, which he could neither ignore nor forgive.

The last morning of our pleasant stay had come. Violet had hurried away to her mineral bath, from which she was wont to return like Hebe or Aurora, or any one famous for rosiest health. Herbert had been away for a day's walking, but had promised to return in time 'to see us off.'

After her bath, Violet walked away along the winding-path, up to the heights that tower over the town.

'I wanted to take a last look at the dear place,' she told me afterwards, 'and I marched away, up and up, till I came to the brightest point for the view. I took my hat off, and stood panting and looking down, when, all at once, Herbert stepped out of the wood. He startled me so ! And I was so warm and so out of breath, and my hair all untidy ! I was so ashamed ! He said he had been walking since before sunrise, on purpose to—to—to see us again before we went, and to offer me a little flower that he had found. He said, "Was it not a very strange time of year for a—for this?" Then he showed me a forget-me-not. It seemed to come in answer to his thoughts and wishes, he said, just as now came the Violet in whose hand he wished to lay that other blossom. Then he gave me the flower, and held my hand—and—somehow, all at once, he held me too, and I cried, and I think he cried, but I don't know. He said he was too happy. Dearest of mothers, I do know that I do love him, and that I am too happy, and that it is—so nice !'

So the woman had arisen at last. It was not very long before I had to give into another's keeping the glorious flower that had come so young and guileless a blossom into mine.

It is only a sketch, you see—a little jotting-down about sunshine and love ; perhaps a rain or a storm cloud ; but it speaks of a time that has led to a very beautiful summer in two human lives, now one.

THE END.

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